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CANINE FLU – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW – JUNE 7, 2018

The problem now is Canine Influenza Virus H3N2 – an Influenza A avian strain that infected dogs in Korea and was introduced into USA in 2015

Only a few isolated cases of H3N2 were diagnosed in the TriState area before April

The first dog diagnosed with H3N2 in this outbreak was a North Brooklyn (our back yard) doggie day care client, on April 30

Over 90 cases have been confirmed in Brooklyn (and recently also Manhattan) since April. HOWEVER, this number grossly underestimates the severity of the problem:

- only counts cases confirmed by laboratory tests – most dogs never tested
- data reported from only one lab (out of several commonly used in area)
- tests are often negative even in infected dogs, due to intermittent shedding

H3N2 is HIGHLY contagious, spread by viral particles in nasal and oral secretions

Because this is new to our area, virtually ALL dogs exposed will become infected

When a dog sneezes, it can spray viral particles 20 to 25 feet! Close contact is NOT needed

H3N2 survives in environment up to 48 hours (usually 12 – 24 hours). IMPORTANT POINT – CANNOT PROTECT YOUR DOG BY AVOIDING DIRECT CONTACT! MUST avoid areas and items that other dogs have had recent contact with, such as communal water bowls, shared toys, beds, cages, etc. People can carry virus from dog to dog on hands and clothing too

Parks Dept and NYC may be posting signs warning of potentially infectious areas – we hope they do this

Incubation is 3 to 7 days from exposure

Infected dog can shed virus 2 days (maybe more) BEFORE clinical signs – so apparently healthy dogs may be infecting other dogs

Some infected dogs - 10% to 20% - NEVER show any signs, but still shed virus

Infected dogs CONTINUE to shed for 21 to 24 days POST infection, so any dog with Flu MUST be isolated from other dogs minimum of 3 weeks, even if seems recovered

H3N2 CANNOT be diagnosed based on clinical signs – many other canine respiratory infections look exactly the same

Signs include: fever; lethargy; persistent cough; sneezing; nasal discharge; decreased appetite

Unlike human flu, dogs do not typically exhibit vomiting or diarrhea

Dogs are usually sick for 7 to 10 days, but may still shed virus after recovered. Cough may persist for as long as 30 days

If you think your dog may have flu:

- immediately quarantine – keep away from other dogs and areas for dogs
- see your veterinarian
- consider testing – although not always diagnostic, can be very helpful

Treatment for Flu is supportive care, same as for people, but veterinarians often prescribe antibiotics initially since some canine respiratory infections are bacterial and look exactly the same as Flu.

Co-infections with multiple organisms also common, as are secondary bacterial infections

Mortality for H3N2 is LOW – as with human flu. Reported rates vary, but in healthy dogs is likely less than 1%. Like Flu in humans, the very young, very old, pregnant and nursing mothers, and those with pre-existing conditions or poor health are at greater risk for serious complications

Vaccination for H3N2 is available

- needs initial vaccine and booster 3 to 4 weeks later (one brand is 2 weeks)
- full immunity achieved 2 weeks after SECOND dose
- annual booster required (one vaccine then)
- BE SURE to get bivalent H3N2 AND H3N8 – N8 is another strain of flu
- vaccination does NOT prevent infection, but reduces severity of disease
- previous infection does not guarantee immunity – should still vaccinate

Anyone in the dog care business – vets, groomers, day care operators, walkers, shelter workers, etc, should vaccinate their own dogs! We can carry this home!

Vaccination for Bordatella (“kennel cough”) is essential as well – and is required for day care and grooming every 6 months

H3N2 can infect cats – reported in one shelter in Indiana in 2016. May infect ferrets and guinea pigs too. No evidence of human infection at this time

For more information:

- AVMA.org
- DogFlu.com (keep in mind this website is sponsored by Merck)