

## **Canine influenza update**

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The most recent outbreak of Canine influenza in the Midwest is a different strain of canine influenza (H3N2) than what has been seen in the past in the US (H3N8). This new strain resembles strains of canine influenza seen in Southeast Asia. While the signs of influenza are the same; coughing, lethargy, nasal discharge, respiratory difficulty, very high fever, symptoms may be more pronounced with this new strain. Dogs are most contagious during the incubation period (2-4 days from exposure to developing signs) but may still infect other animals up to 7 days after their own exposure. Up to 80% of exposed dogs show signs of illness and mortality rate is less than 10 %. In general, the influenza virus can live up to 48 hrs on inert surfaces, 24hrs on clothing, and 12 hrs on hands. It is important to note that currently there are cases of both strains diagnosed within the US.

Testing to confirm this new strain is challenging as there is currently no validated, canine-specific serologic test for the H3N2 and this virus is different enough from the H3N8 that there may not be cross reactivity. This significant difference is also very important regarding vaccination. Currently there is no vaccine for the H3N2 strain, nor has it been determined if the current vaccine for H3N8 will offer protection against the new strain. However, vaccinating for H3N8 is still recommended as that strain has also been diagnosed in certain regions of the USA in early 2015. Companies are working hard to develop both testing and vaccinating products, however time to approval is unknown.

Precautionary measures are the same regardless of strain. Avoid areas where there is close contact between dogs. Strict cleaning/disinfecting measures should be taken even in cases of presumptive contact with an affected animal. If an animal shows signs consistent with canine influenza, please contact your veterinarian immediately; not only for the health of your animal but to hopefully minimize the spread of the dangerous pathogen.