

Canine Influenza

- **What is Canine Influenza?** Canine influenza is highly contagious infection caused by an influenza virus.
- **How is it spread?** Canine influenza is spread by aerosolized respiratory secretions, contaminated objects (like kennel surfaces, food and water bowls, and leashes) and people moving between infected and uninfected dogs.
- **What are the signs?** The signs of Canine Influenza are similar to kennel cough and can therefore be easily dismissed by a pet's owner. These include coughing, sneezing, fever, nasal discharge and ocular (eye) discharge. Even dogs that do not show symptoms can still spread the virus. **Unfortunately, by the time dogs show signs of infection, they have unknowingly already been spreading the disease for 2-4 days.**
- **What is the danger to my pet?** Your dog may develop severe pneumonia and in extreme cases, canine influenza has caused death (approx 5-8% in outbreaks)
- **Who is at risk?** All dogs, regardless of age or breed are susceptible to infection.
- **What do I do if my dog seems sick?** Please be vigilant and if you notice that your dog is coughing, sneezing, running a fever, has a nasal discharge or ocular (eye) discharge, then immediately isolate your dog from other dogs and call Big Creek Pet Hospital at 440-234-5831 to arrange for an examination of your dog by one of our veterinarians.
- **Where did it originate?** It first presented itself in Florida in greyhounds in 2004 and has now been found in 30 states (**including Ohio**) and the District of Columbia.

The Canine Flu Vaccine

- **How can I protect my pet?** The best way to protect your dogs from Canine Influenza is to maintain healthy pets and to immunize them with the Canine Influenza Vaccine.
- **How effective is the vaccine?** "Although the vaccine may not prevent infection altogether, efficacy trials have shown that the vaccination may significantly reduce the severity and duration of clinical illness, including the incidence and severity of damage to the lungs.⁴ In addition, the vaccine reduces the amount of virus shed and shortens the shedding interval; therefore, vaccinated dogs that become infected develop less severe illness and are less likely to spread the virus to other dogs."⁹ ¹

¹ From the American Veterinary Medical Association, "Canine Influenza Virus Background" September 7, 2009

- **Is it safe?** While the vaccine has been proven safe and well tolerated in over 700 dogs there is always a slight risk of an adverse reaction. Please call us immediately if your pet has an abnormal reaction to any vaccine or medicine we prescribe for your pet.
- **How often does my pet need to be vaccinated?** The vaccine is initially given in a series of two injections, 2-3 weeks apart, and then annually.
- **Who should get the vaccine?** Big Creek Pet Hospital recommends the vaccine for dogs that socialize with other dogs in places such as grooming & boarding facilities, pet stores, daycares, dog parks and obedience classes. Your dog should be at least 8 weeks old and have no history of vaccine reactions in the past.
- **Can I protect my pet without vaccinations?** One of the most disturbing things about Canine Flu is that animals that are in the contagious stage and shedding the virus show no symptoms. Infected dogs may not show signs until after they are finished shedding the virus to other dogs. Infectious dogs may look perfectly normal, and act perfectly normal, while spreading the disease to other dogs. For that reason, vaccination is really the only practical way of preventing severe disease if your pet, or you, come in contact with other dogs.

We have included the following links to access more information about the disease:

CDC Center for Disease Control website - Canine Flu

<<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/canine/>>

AVMA American Veterinary Medical Association - Canine Flu

<<http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/aug09/090801c.asp>>

Discovery Channel Article

<<http://dsc.discovery.com/news/2009/08/18/dog-canine-virus.html>>