

CANINE INFLUENZA VIRUS (CIV)
News Release from McClung's/Attica Animal Hospitals
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Canine influenza is a newly emerging infectious disease caused by a “flu” virus. In dogs, a highly contagious strain of the influenza A virus known as H3N8 is able to cause respiratory illness. This virus only affects dogs, and those dogs that are young or old are most vulnerable. A new flu vaccine arrived on the market this summer, and developer Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health says it significantly reduces the duration and severity of symptoms and dramatically curbs the flu’s spread.

Dr. Brad McClung of McClung’s and Attica Animal Hospitals recently attended the Toledo Veterinary Medical Association’s informational lecture on Canine H3N8. “Currently 30 states, including Ohio, have reported cases of canine influenza. Virtually every dog exposed to the virus will become infected. This is because the virus is relatively new, and dogs have no natural immunity to it. About 80% of infected dogs will show signs of infection, and dogs that do not show signs of the disease can still spread the virus to other dogs.”

Researchers first identified the canine flu in racing greyhounds where it’s become a problem at tracks throughout the country in the past five years. However, it is becoming a growing problem. The fact that it is hard to diagnose and can be confused with kennel cough until the illness becomes unusually severe or lasts an unusually long time probably explains the recent confirmed outbreaks. “As veterinarians, it is so important that we keep abreast of all the CIV information, so that we understand what we are dealing with and how to effectively prevent and treat these flu symptoms. And pet owners need to be aware also, so that they can promptly report any trouble signs to their veterinarian,” says McClung.

Dr. Brad says that Canine Influenza is usually mild but can become quite serious in some dogs. The most common sign of canine influenza is a persistent cough. Other signs include a low-grade fever, nasal discharge, lack of energy, and loss of appetite. In about 20% of the cases, more severe signs will occur, such as high fever (104F to 106F) and pneumonia. The vast majority of dogs that contract CIV recover in one to three weeks (though up to 5% die, usually of pneumonia that develops secondary to the flu – generally older dogs, puppies and dogs with already compromised immune systems).

“There is currently no specific treatment for CIV. As with all viral illnesses, the disease must run its course. Protection starts by keeping your dog in good general health. A well-nourished, well-rested, well-cared-for pet will have a stronger immune system to help fight off infection,” says Dr. Brad. “Recently, a new canine influenza vaccine- the first of its kind- was approved for use in the US. The initial vaccination requires 2 doses,

2-4 weeks apart, followed by annual revaccination. The two shots cost about \$20 each and are given to dogs six weeks and older,” says Dr. McClung.

The availability of a vaccine can help prevent the medical, financial and emotional costs associated with this new virus. Added Dr. McClung, “Your veterinarian can advise you whether this new vaccine should be added to your dog’s vaccination schedule.”