

# CANINE INFLUENZA

What do I need to know?

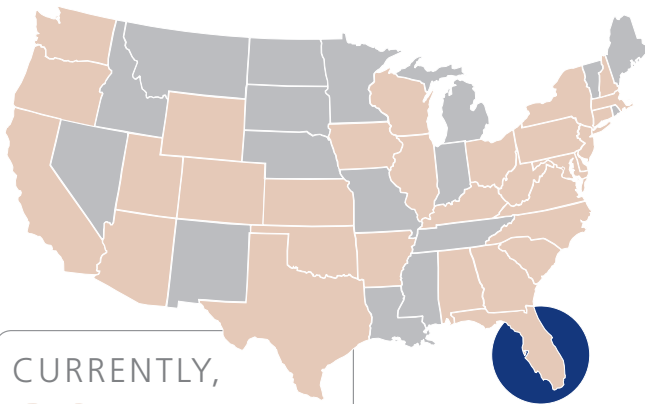




## What is canine influenza?

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. Other strains of the influenza A virus are responsible for causing infections in birds, horses, pigs, and people.

**Canine influenza virus only affects dogs.**



CURRENTLY,  
**30 states**  
have reported cases  
of canine influenza.

The virus was first reported  
in Florida in March 2003.

■ States with infected dogs

## How contagious is canine influenza?

Just like human “flu,” canine influenza is highly contagious. In fact, unless a dog has already had the illness and recovered, 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. While 100% of dogs are susceptible to influenza infection, about 80% of infected dogs will show signs of infection. Dogs that do not show signs of the disease can still spread the virus to other dogs.

Since 2003, there have been numerous reports of influenza outbreaks in veterinary clinics, kennels, and shelters. Some of these outbreaks were traced back to the presence of one sick dog that spread the virus throughout the facility and infected many other dogs.

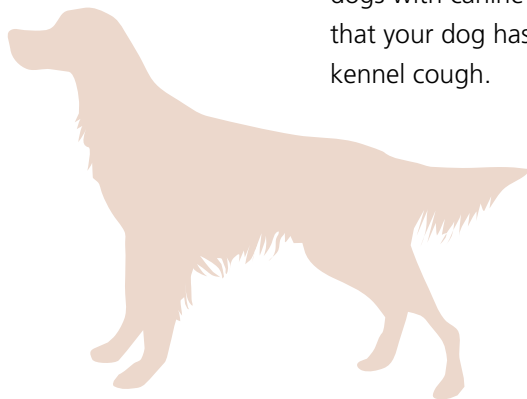


## What are the signs of canine influenza?

The most common sign of canine influenza is a persistent cough. Some dogs have a soft, moist, “productive” cough, while others have a dry cough similar to that seen in dogs with kennel cough—a respiratory condition that is caused by any of a number of other viruses and bacteria. It’s this similarity to kennel cough that makes it hard for your veterinarian to diagnose which illness your dog has.

About 80% of dogs who show signs of influenza will have mild disease. Signs in this case include a low-grade fever, nasal discharge, lack of energy, loss of appetite, and a cough that can last for up to a month.

lasting cough  
low-grade fever  
nasal discharge  
lack of energy  
loss of appetite



## How serious is canine influenza?

Canine influenza is usually mild but can become quite serious in some dogs. In about 20% of the cases, more severe signs will occur, such as a high fever (104°F to 106°F) and pneumonia. A small number of dogs infected with the virus have died from complications associated with the disease.

## How is canine influenza infection diagnosed?

It’s hard to diagnose canine influenza. Many times it can be confused with kennel cough because the signs are very similar. Often canine influenza is not suspected until the illness becomes unusually severe or lasts an unusually long time. Your veterinarian may collect blood or nasal swab samples; however, these laboratory tests may not confirm canine influenza infection because the samples must be taken at the appropriate time in the course of your dog’s illness. If your dog has a history of being exposed to other dogs with canine influenza, it is reasonable to suspect that your dog has something more than ordinary kennel cough.



## Is my dog at risk for infection?

Most dogs, regardless of breed or age, are at risk for canine influenza. However, certain venues and activities can raise your dog's risk of canine influenza infection even higher. Review this list of questions to see if any of these places or activities apply to your pet.

### Does your dog:

- Come from a shelter, rescue center, breeding kennel, or pet store?
- Board at a kennel or go to doggie daycare?
- Attend group training or “dog kindergarten”?
- Visit a groomer, dog parks, or engage with other dogs on daily walks?
- Enter dog events?
- Come into contact with other dogs in the waiting room during visits to your veterinary clinic?

IF YOU ANSWERED “YES” TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE QUESTIONS, tell your veterinarian and ask what can be done to protect your dog from canine influenza.

## How is canine influenza spread?

Canine influenza spreads the same way that human flu spreads—through *direct contact* (kissing, licking, nuzzling); through *the air* (coughing or sneezing); and via *contaminated surfaces* (such as when a person picks up the virus on their hands or clothing, then touches or pets a dog). Spread can also occur if that same person touches and contaminates another surface—a doorknob, for example.



Direct **contact**



Cough or sneeze



**Contaminated**  
hands, clothing, or  
other surfaces



## How can I protect my dog from canine influenza?

Protection starts by keeping your dog in good general health. A well-nourished, well-rested, and well-cared-for pet will have a stronger immune system to help fight off infection. When you must board your pet, make sure the facility is clean, well-maintained, and that there is an influenza outbreak management plan in place.

Recently, a new canine influenza vaccine—the first of its kind—was approved for use in the US. Canine Influenza Vaccine, H3N8 from Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health has been clinically proven to significantly reduce the severity of influenza and the length of time that a dog is sick. The initial vaccination requires 2 doses, 2–4 weeks apart, followed by annual revaccination. If your dog is presently being vaccinated for kennel cough (*Bordetella*), it is a likely candidate for Canine Influenza Vaccine, H3N8.\*

Your veterinarian can advise you whether this new influenza vaccine should be added to your dog's vaccination schedule.

Notice: This product license is conditional. As with all USDA conditionally licensed products, data submitted to the USDA supports a reasonable expectation of efficacy. Safety was established in trials involving more than 700 dogs. Consultation with a veterinarian is recommended.

## What can be done if my dog becomes infected?

There is currently no specific treatment for canine influenza. As with all viral illnesses, the disease must run its course. Supportive care, such as providing a good diet and making sure your dog's body has enough fluids, can help your dog fight the infection. A little extra tender loving care can also go a long way.

Sometimes canine influenza infections can become complicated by secondary bacterial infections. One sign of this is a yellow-green, thick nasal discharge, which your veterinarian may treat with an antibiotic. The coughing that comes with influenza is actually the body's way of getting rid of the virus. If the cough is moist and productive, you should not try to stop it with a cough suppressant. Human "flu" medicines should not be given to your dog because they have not been studied or approved for use in dogs with canine influenza.

\*Please note that while the canine parainfluenza vaccine has a similar name, it works against a completely different virus and does not offer any protection against canine influenza.



## Is the new canine influenza vaccine safe?

The new vaccine was proven safe and well tolerated in over 700 dogs. There were over 30 breeds ranging in age from 6 weeks to 10 years old.

## Where can I learn more about canine influenza?

Your veterinarian is the best person to answer any further questions you have about canine influenza. In addition, you may find it helpful to explore these websites for more information:

[www.doginfluenza.com](http://www.doginfluenza.com)

[www.avma.org/public\\_health/influenza/canine\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/canine_bgnd.asp)

[www.sheltermedicine.com/portal/is\\_canine\\_influenza\\_update.shtml](http://www.sheltermedicine.com/portal/is_canine_influenza_update.shtml)

[www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-care-canine-flu-question-and-answer.html](http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-care-canine-flu-question-and-answer.html)

## To protect your pet, talk to your vet.

Remember, your veterinarian is the best source of information regarding the health of your pet. After all, who knows more about the patient than the doctor? Don't be shy about asking questions or scheduling time with your veterinarian just to talk. Finally, be sure to call your veterinarian if you have any questions about canine influenza or vaccination, or if you notice your dog coughing or showing other signs of a respiratory infection.



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