

Ask the Vet

Christine E. Hunt, DVM

Dr. Christine E. Hunt received her B.S. in Zoology from N.C. State University, cum laude, followed by her veterinary doctorate from Oklahoma State University. She has practiced small animal medicine, dentistry and surgery in Greensboro for 27 years. In 2003, she opened University Animal Hospital. Her interests lie in geriatric medicine, pain management and advanced dentistry.

Q What is Canine Influenza?

A Canine Influenza is a highly contagious strain of H3N8 virus that causes classic flu symptoms in dogs. Symptoms include coughing, runny nose and eyes, and fever. Because most of our dog population has no immunity to this new virus, almost every exposed dog will become infected. Only dogs that have been vaccinated or previously infected and recovered are exempt.

Approximately 80% of infected dogs will display mild to moderate symptoms lasting for several weeks, while the remaining 20% can experience serious complications that require extensive hospitalization.

In some cases, a serious pneumonia has resulted in a mortality rate as high as 8%. This is considerably higher than the 1% mortality rate reported with human influenza. Dogs infected with canine flu can shed the virus for up to 10 days before showing any signs of illness. The virus spreads between dogs by direct contact (licking or nuzzling), indirect contact (coughing or sneezing) or through contaminated surfaces (human hands, clothes and floor surfaces).

Q Where did Canine Influenza originate?

A Canine Influenza is an emerging virus that has been spreading slowly across the United States. In 2003, the Equine Influenza Virus mutated, as influenza viruses often do, and crossed species to infect racing greyhounds in Florida. Since then, the virus has now been identified in at least 30 states including North Carolina and Virginia. The most recent cases were reported in Asheville with additional suspect reports from Hickory.

Q What dogs are at risk?

A Dogs at risk include those that:

- Attend dog events or travel to high risk areas;
- Go to large daycare facilities, dog parks or group training classes;
- Board at large kennels or visit large grooming facilities; and
- Have owners who volunteer, work or are adding a new dog friend from an animal shelter, rescue organization or pet store that purchases puppies from high risk areas.

Q What is the treatment for Canine Influenza?

A If your dog is exposed to any of the risk factors listed above, a vaccination is currently available to reduce the severity of H3N8 Canine Influenza virus significantly. Like other vaccines that your dog has received, it initially takes two doses of the vaccine given two to four weeks apart to provide protection against canine flu. After the vaccine series, your dog should receive annual boosters. If you have questions regarding Canine Influenza, the influenza vaccination, or if your dog has possible symptoms of the infection, be sure to contact your veterinarian. Your dog's veterinarian is your best resource for information.

University Animal Hospital of Greensboro, LLC

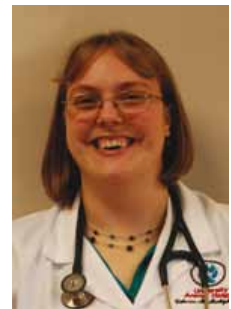


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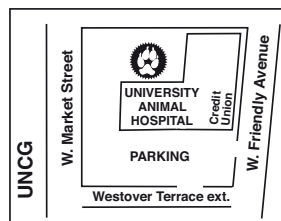
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