



## CANINE INFLUENZA VIRUS

**What is Canine Influenza?** Canine influenza virus (CIV) is a contagious respiratory disease of dogs, first identified in 2004 and classified as H3N8. Although the virus appears to be readily spread between dogs, there is currently no evidence to suggest that it can be transmitted from dogs to people.

**What are the signs of CIV?** Canine influenza may affect of any age dog. As a relatively new virus, virtually all dogs exposed become infected with approximately 80% of those showing clinical signs. According to the most recent update from the American Veterinary Medical Association, clinical signs may be mild or severe (most dogs having the mild form of CIV), with a cough that lasts for 2-3 weeks despite treatment with antibiotics and cough suppressants. Dogs may also have a nasal discharge and/or a fever. More severely affected dogs have pneumonia-like signs, and, while uncommon, deaths from CIV have been reported.

**How is CIV treated?** Clinical signs alone cannot be used make diagnosis of CIV, as these are similar to other canine respiratory diseases (e.g., kennel cough). While lab testing may be important in trying to detect an outbreak of CIV, often a suspected case is treated symptomatically, mainly through supportive care for long enough to allow the dog a chance to clear the infection. In certain cases antibiotics may be used to help protect against secondary bacterial infections.

**Is there a vaccine for CIV?** A vaccine has recently been approved for use in the prevention of CIV. While it may not completely prevent infection, trials have shown that it may significantly lessen the severity and duration of illness.

**Should my dog be vaccinated for CIV?** The CIV vaccine is not considered a core vaccination and is not recommended for every dog. There is not yet a clear-cut, definitive answer as to which dogs should be vaccinated for CIV. At Metrowest Veterinary Associates, while we do have the vaccination available to our clients, we do not require CIV vaccinations for dogs boarding with us. Some of the following factors that may help you decide whether or not to vaccinate your dog for CIV:

- The risk group for CIV is similar to that for kennel cough, (e.g., frequent boarders, show dogs). Pet dogs at home are at very low risk.
- Some of the boarding facilities in the area have started requiring CIV vaccination (as well as other vaccinations) before allowing dogs into the facility.
- The only vaccination available is very new and is *conditionally* approved. While clinical tests were done prior to release, there is not a long history of use in clinical situations to confirm its efficacy or evaluate safety issues that may show up with large-scale usage. As with all vaccinations, there is a risk of reaction to administration of the vaccine.
- Vaccination does not guarantee immunity to the disease, and may act simply to lessen the severity and duration of illness.
- To provide adequate protection, vaccination is given in two doses (given 2-4 weeks apart), followed by a yearly booster. Therefore, dogs vaccinated less than 3-4 weeks prior to exposure may not be protected by the vaccination.

In summary, **canine influenza virus** (CIV) is a highly contagious infection that produces respiratory signs similar to those of kennel cough. While a new vaccination is available to lessen the severity and duration of the illness, risk factors for the disease as well as weighing the benefits and risks of vaccination may help you determine whether or not to vaccinate your pet for CIV. As always, please feel free to contact the clinic if you have any questions or concerns.