What is canine influenza?

- Canine influenza (CI) is a highly contagious illness that resembles the common “kennel cough.” Any dog can contract the virus at any time (not just during a specific “flu season”).
- There is no evidence that suggests humans can contract CI; however, it appears that some strains of the virus can infect cats.
- The strain identified in the Chicago and Madison outbreaks (H3N2) is new to the United States; previously it had only been seen in Asia.

How is it spread?

- Similar to human flu, CI is spread through both direct (e.g., coughing and sneezing) and indirect contact (e.g., contaminated objects like food bowls and leashes). Even people who come into contact with an infected dog can carry the virus to another animal.
- The virus can survive on surfaces for 48 hours, so proper disinfecting methods and frequent hand washing are important in controlling the spread of CI.

How can it be prevented?

- Veterinarians recommend vaccinating dogs that may come in contact with infected dogs in boarding facilities, dog parks, doggie day-care and other public places.
- Vaccinating at-risk dogs may not prevent infection, but it can reduce the duration and severity of the illness. However, it is unknown whether the currently available vaccines will protect against the new strain of the virus.

What are the symptoms?

- Once infected, dogs usually show symptoms in two to four days.
- Almost all dogs that are exposed to the virus will contract the illness, with 80 percent developing flu-like symptoms that include:
  - Cough
  - Nasal and/or eye discharge
  - Fever
  - Lethargy
  - Reduced appetite
- If you suspect your dog has been infected with the virus or is exhibiting symptoms of illness, contact your veterinarian to schedule an exam.

Although canine influenza has been around since 2004, recent outbreaks in Chicago and Madison, Wis., have put the disease back in the spotlight. Pet owners should familiarize themselves with the symptoms and take steps to protect their dogs.

How is it treated?

- Your veterinarian can diagnose CI early on (within four days of exposure) with a nasal or throat swab. A blood test within the first week of illness is the most accurate way to determine if your dog has CI.
- Most dogs recover within a few weeks and need only supportive care.
- For more severe cases, medications and/or fluid therapy may be necessary for treatment. The mortality rate is less than 10 percent.

Need a Veterinarian?

If you have questions about canine influenza, the best source of information is your veterinarian! Find an OVMA member in your community online at www.ohiovma.org/public.