

Canine Influenza

There are three pertinent questions for dog owners in regard to canine flu: *What is it?*, *Can my dog get it?*, and, *How can I prevent it?*



Lillington Veterinary Hospital

The CDC is monitoring this virus for spread to humans

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Canine flu is a new disease caused by an influenza virus that previously only infected horses. It entered the canine population in Florida where it caused devastating outbreaks of respiratory illness in racing greyhounds. Since early 2004 it has spread to dogs in at least 30 states and has become part of the respiratory tract complex of diseases we call "Kennel Cough" or Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC). It is characterized by a cough, fever and sneezing—as are distemper, Bordetella, parainfluenza and adenovirus, the other disease we typically vaccinate against. We can only know for sure what organism is causing the symptoms if we send samples to the lab for testing!

Any dog who spends time with groups of dogs in a kennel situation, at a groomers, at a dog show or in training is *at risk*. Flu is spread through highly contagious respiratory secretions. Most of our patients have no immunity to this bug—vaccines aren't 100% protective but significantly reduce the severity of symptoms and spread of illness. Outbreaks have led to the quarantine of veterinary facilities in some cases.

A *vaccine* is now available, in single unit form, given in a series of two, administered 2-4 weeks apart. We do recommend its' use in dogs who receive Bordetella vaccination.