

HEALTH ALERT: CANINE INFLUENZA

There has been quite a bit publicity going around about a new illness that is spreading among dogs, so we decided to do some research on our own to provide to our Wag-N-Train adopters and friends to dispel some of the rumors flying around.

Canine Influenza is very contagious and is spreading amongst the domestic dog population. The disease was first identified in 2004 at Greyhound race tracks, but now has spread among pet dogs in many states and at present there is no vaccination available and there is no cure. The good news is there is no need to panic. Most dogs who contract canine flu will clear it up on their own and there are antibiotic medications and IV fluids that help in recovery. About 80% of dogs infected with the virus will receive only a mild form of the disease so it's not as deadly as some sources out there are making it out to be.

Canine influenza is a respiratory disease that is closely related to the horse influenza virus. According to the Centers For Disease Control (CDC) at this time there is no evidence that it will spread to humans or cats and it is not related to the avian/bird flu were hearing so much about.

Because canine flu is a new disease, dogs have no natural immunity, so most all dogs that are exposed to the virus will get infected, but not all dogs infected with the virus will show signs of the flu which is adding to the spread of the disease since dogs not showing any symptoms can still pass the virus to other dogs. The virus is present in respiratory secretions, so it is easily passed from one dog to another nose to nose. The virus is most easily spread where dogs are in close proximity to each other, such as boarding, doggy day care, and dog parks. So you'll want to take some precautions by keeping your dog away from other dogs who are showing the obvious signs of illness and by not letting your dog share toys, food or water bowls with other dogs. The most common signs of canine flu are a fever, runny nose and cough. These are also the same signs for another well-known canine disease called kennel cough (bordetella bronchiseptica). The difference is that kennel cough is a bacterial infection which there is an effective vaccine for. There is at present no vaccine available for canine influenza, and the bordetella vaccination will not protect your dog from canine influenza. Kennel cough and dog influenza can both progress to pneumonia, so if your dog shows signs of a fever, runny nose and cough you should contact your veterinarian immediately. Although most dogs recover within weeks from canine flu, there have been some fatalities linked to the disease. Just like the human flu, there is a portion of the dog population that are more susceptible to contracting the disease (elderly dogs, dogs with suppressed immune systems, etc.) Early detection and treatment is the best bet for your dog's full recovery.

For More Information check out this link on the Center For Disease Control Website:
<http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/transcripts/t050926.htm>