

Dog owners urged to vaccinate pets against new flu

November 26 2015, by Claudia Wheatley

A virologist at the College of Veterinary Medicine urges dog owners to take advantage of a new vaccine to protect against H3N2, the strain of canine influenza that sickened hundreds of dogs in the Chicago area last March and has since spread across the U.S. Edward Dubovi, who helped identify the virus, says H3N2 is more of a challenge than the older H3N8 virus.

"Based on experimental studies in Asia and the rate of spread we've observed, I would estimate that H3N2 produces 10 times more virus than H3N8, which makes it far more contagious," Dubovi says. In addition, the H3N2 virus may be shed for up to 24 days, far longer than H3N8. As a result, it can spread rapidly.

"Preventing the transmission of the disease through vaccination is highly recommended for those dogs that are at greater risk," Dubovi says. This includes dogs that spend time at doggie day care, boarding facilities, dog parks and any other location where dogs commingle.

The vaccine may be given to healthy dogs age 6 weeks and older. It is delivered in two doses spaced a few weeks apart, so owners who plan to put their dogs in kennels for the holidays, and northerners who take their pets south for the winter, should make appointments now.

In addition, "people moving animals ought to try to minimize contact between their pet and other pets at their destination. You shouldn't take your dog from Chicago to Tucson, Arizona, and immediately put him in

a doggy day care," says Dubovi. Day care providers and groomers should always ask where a new dog has been, he adds. "Both sides need to act responsibly in situations where we know there will be a large number of animals moving to the south, and vice versa in the spring."

Symptoms of H3N2 include coughing, [runny nose](#), fever and reduced activity. Owners whose dogs show these signs should contact their veterinarians.

Provided by Cornell University

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