

## Frequently Asked Questions about Canine Influenza / Dog Flu

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*This information was developed in collaboration with the Oregon Humane Society.*

Over the past few months, you may have been hearing more about canine influenza, or dog flu, in Oregon. Quick response by shelters, rescue groups and community veterinarians has limited the number of dogs that have become ill with the dog flu. Understandably, this has sparked questions from the public and adopters.

Pet-owners should be assured that shelters, rescue groups, veterinarians and state health agencies are all working together to ensure the health and safety of animals in our community.

### **What is Canine Influenza, also known as “dog flu”?**

*Dog flu is a virus that is very contagious and results in symptoms similar to the flu in humans. While the virus is relatively new to our area, cases have been reported in more than 30 states.*

### **Are there different strains of dog flu?**

*Similar to the flu in humans, there are different strains of dog flu (H3N8 and H3N2). The most recent strain documented in Oregon is H3N2, although three cases of H3N8 dog flu were identified in the mid-Willamette Valley in 2013.*

### **What are the symptoms?**

*Symptoms include coughing, sneezing, wheezing, runny nose, loss of appetite and fever. These symptoms can be very similar to kennel cough or any other respiratory infection.*

### **Is dog flu contagious?**

*Dog flu is very contagious and spreads through the air. The most common way dogs contract the flu are by exposure to coughing or sneezing dogs. The virus can also live in the environment up to 24 hours. The best way to prevent the spread of dog flu is by keeping the environment clean and washing hands with soap and water.*

### **Are some dogs at greater risk?**

*Dogs at most risk of exposure are those with a social lifestyle, participate in events or are housed in group settings. This includes dogs in boarding kennels, day care centers, shelters, dog shows, veterinary clinics, grooming parlors, etc. Dogs that mostly stay at home and walk around the neighborhood are at low risk.*

### **Can cats get dog flu?**

*Although it is extremely rare, the H3N2 virus has been transmitted to cats in a few very specific cases. In these situations there were large populations of cats in close proximity to infected dogs.*

**If I have adopted my dog from a local shelter or rescue is he/she at greater risk?**

*Any dog adopted from a shelter or rescue organization is at greater risk for respiratory illnesses due to environmental conditions, stress and exposure. It is important to consult the medical team at the shelter where you adopt or your primary care veterinarian if any signs of illness develop after adoption. At the Oregon Humane Society, as well as other shelters, animals who come into the shelter receive a thorough examination to make sure any illnesses are quickly identified.*

**What should I do if my dog has flu symptoms?**

*Make an appointment with your veterinarian. Do not go to the clinic without calling first since your pet may be contagious to other dogs. Keep in mind that your dog may have a respiratory infection caused by other viruses or bacteria, and not the canine influenza virus. This can only be determined by testing performed by your veterinarian.*

**Should I be concerned about the recent dog flu cases at the Oregon Humane Society?**

*The Oregon Humane Society quickly isolated the dogs that were exposed to dog flu and the illness was contained. As dog flu becomes more common in our area, best practices are being shared with shelters and rescue groups, in collaboration with state health agencies and national experts in infectious disease and shelter medicine.*

**What are the treatments?**

*Similar to influenza treatment for people, our canine patients need rest, hydration, and treatment for their symptoms. This could include cough suppressants and appetite stimulants. They should also be monitored for secondary infections that may require antibiotics. In order to decrease the chance of spreading the virus, it's best not to hospitalize dogs with influenza if they can be treated safely at home.*

**Should I get my dog vaccinated?**

*Every pet's needs and risks are different so you should speak with your family veterinarian for specific recommendations. It's important to know that while the vaccine can be useful, it doesn't prevent the spread of the virus. A vaccinated dog can still get canine influenza, but the illness will likely be shorter and less severe.*

**Is dog flu fatal?**

*Dog flu is rarely fatal but can cause complications in dogs that are very young, very old, have weakened immune systems or other health issues.*