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## A Closer Look at Canine Flu

### *Does Your Dog Have Canine Flu?*

The symptoms for canine influenza virus (CIV) are similar to those of other respiratory illnesses, so only a trained veterinarian can properly diagnose and treat your dog. Persistent coughing is the primary clinical sign. Nasal discharge indicates a secondary bacterial infection that requires antibiotic treatment. Progression to pneumonia, which leads to fever, lethargy and rapid breathing, requires hospitalization and antibiotics. Fewer than 10 percent of dogs may experience pneumonia, but those that do can die, making this a serious health concern.

Not all dogs who cough are infected with CIV. They may have another kind of respiratory infection, such as bordetellosis, which can be treated with medication. Because CIV is a virus, however, it needs to run its course. Dogs are given supportive care to help ensure the illness doesn't progress into a more serious form of bacterial infection or pneumonia.

Because of the contagious nature of this virus, a coughing dog should be isolated from other dogs until a proper diagnosis is made. CIV can live in the air for two to four days and is estimated to be projected between 20 and 100 feet through sneezing or coughing. In addition CIV can live on objects such as food bowls, toys and clothing so it can spread via a dog's contact with contaminated objects or through caretakers who have handled infected dogs or contaminated objects. Fortunately, the virus is easily killed on surfaces by use of disinfectants and diluted, not concentrated, bleach.

### *Separating the Facts from the Myths*

1. Dogs infected with canine influenza are highly contagious before they show clinical signs of infection. The virus is shed primarily during the first days after exposure, but coughing doesn't start until 2-5 days after exposure.
2. Dogs do not carry the disease indefinitely. They shed virus for about seven days after exposure. Once a dog stops shedding the virus, it can't infect another dog. Coughing may continue for 10-30 days due to inflammation and damage in the respiratory tract.
3. The virus itself can't be treated, but secondary bacterial infections associated with this virus require antibiotics and in the case of pneumonia, hospitalization.
4. Vaccines against *Bordatella bronchiseptica* bacteria and other infectious respiratory agents won't protect your dog from CIV. There is no current vaccine to prevent CIV infection.
5. CIV can affect dogs of all ages, not only the very young, elderly or immune-suppressed.
6. Canine flu has no particular season. It can spread at any point during the year.
7. Canine flu can be serious, but most dogs recover easily. Proper diagnosis and care will help to ensure that your dog is back to his usually healthy self in no time.