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CANINE INFLUENZA AND THE NEW VACCINE

Doctors of Dallas Metro Paws

Canine Influenza is a flu virus that affects dogs. It is thought to have mutated from the equine influenza a few years ago and was first seen in racing greyhounds in 2004. Recently, a new vaccine has been released with conditional approval and has generated a lot of press about this virus. There is a lot of misinformation and fear about this disease in dogs especially with the recent human and swine flu epidemics. This is intended to clarify a few points.

A few facts:

Canine influenza is primarily a disease of sheltered dogs in high density, high stress, and less than ideal cleanliness environments. Currently, it is very rare to have a community outbreak of otherwise healthy non-stressed dogs. The vaccination for the disease is not considered core (required) by the American Animal Hospital Association.

The vaccination is given in a 2 vaccine series 3-4 weeks apart. The vaccine is a killed adjuvanted vaccine. The vaccine does not completely prevent the flu in a vaccinated dog. They can still have illness, although it should be more mild, and even vaccinated dogs can spread the virus to other dogs.

Flu viruses in other species mutate quickly and a new vaccine is typically required every year. It is not known in dogs if and how fast the virus mutates. Thus, it unknown how effective the vaccine will continue to be in future years unless it is updated like the human flu vaccine.

If a canine flu outbreak occurs, a few things are important to remember:

- Most dogs will have mild to no illness
- A few dogs will become ill with a moist cough that persists up to 1 month
- Mortality of healthy dogs is <1%. Rarely 5% of very stressed dogs (shelter/ intense training) will succumb to pneumonia
- It is not known to be zoonotic – i.e. you cannot give or get the flu from your dog
- The virus is easily killed by most disinfectants
- Only board your dog where you trust the hygiene requirements of the location

Current Recommendations:

We at Metro Paws are always looking at the latest vaccines, treatments, and disease trends to keep your pets healthy. At this time, we are continuing to monitor the canine influenza threat by testing suspected dogs. We have not had a positive flu test in dogs in 3 ½ years of testing. Vaccines are always a risk/benefit decision. There are many vaccines available that are not used because the risk of infection is so low in Texas. We do not currently believe all dogs should be widely vaccinated for canine influenza at this time. We will continue to monitor the threat and let you know of any changes in our policy. Please call us with any concerns: 