

To all our wonderful Monarch clients and precious patients.

Canine Influenza

You may have heard about the recent outbreak of Canine Influenza. More recently we have been hearing about an outbreak of Canine Influenza occurring in Los Angeles county that has spread through multiple boarding facilities and a few animal shelters. Canine Influenza is a contagious disease and virtually all dogs exposed to Canine influenza will contract the disease, but it generally it is a much less devastating disease, with a very low mortality rate (<10%), almost all in immunocompromised dogs.

We have now heard reports of several Canine Influenza cases in Orange County, so we are taking this time to advise you on our recommendations.

What is it?

Canine Influenza virus is a contagious respiratory virus that can be transmitted between dogs, but does not infect people. Most dogs with this virus will show mild symptoms such as coughing, runny nose or fever.

How is it spread?

As with most flu viruses, it is spread by air or close contact with an infected dog. Canine Influenza is transmitted directly through droplets or aerosols from the respiratory tract (through sneezing, barking, coughing, etc.) and can be spread indirectly on objects (food/water bowls, collar/leashes, etc.) or through people that have had contact with an infected dog.

Dogs in close contact with infected dogs in places such as kennels, doggy day care facilities, groomers, dog parks and shelters are at an increased risk of infections.

Infected animals usually show signs within the first week after exposure (although about 20% of infected dogs show no clinical signs and are just carriers of the disease). The most common clinical sign is a cough. Other signs can include nasal or eye discharge, sneezing, lethargy, fever and not eating. More severely affected dogs can exhibit signs of pneumonia.

If your pet is experiencing any of these signs, it is advised to isolate them (and other dogs in the household) for 4 weeks to prevent further spread of the disease.

Treatment?

Treatment for the disease, as with most viral diseases, is supportive care (such as fluids, fever reducers and cough suppressants) and if secondary infection is

suspected, antibiotics may be prescribed. Most dogs recover from clinical signs within 3 weeks.

Supportive care is the name of the game for the most part, but once a physical examination is completed and diagnosis and prognosis assessed, a treatment plan specific to the pet can be established.

Vaccine?

There is a Canine Influenza Vaccine available. It consists of a series of TWO injections given 2-4 weeks apart. This vaccine is designed to decrease severity of the disease and to decrease viral shedding, but it **DOES NOT** prevent against infection. It is considered a “lifestyle” vaccine. Meaning, we are encouraging vaccination for those pets that are going to be in higher risk situations, like boarding facilities/dog parks/doggy day care/grooming facilities. In fact, many of these facilities are now requiring vaccination (so plan ahead to allow time to get both of the required injections). Be advised that the vaccine is not considered “protective” until 10-14 days after the 2nd injection.

Leptospirosis

We have also been receiving information through the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association over the past couple months about an outbreak of Leptospirosis occurring in Los Angeles county. We have been advising clients that live or frequent LA county to consider vaccinating for Lepto, as it can be a devastating disease for our canine companions. Clinical signs of Leptospirosis can include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, depression, muscle pain, increased thirst and lack of appetite. Leptospirosis can be fatal as it causes damage to the liver and the kidneys. It is generally spread through contact with infected urine from rodents or other infected dogs. This can be from contaminated water, urine-contaminated soil, or from eating infected tissues from a carcass. The vaccine available for Leptospirosis is a series of TWO injections given 2-4 weeks apart. If you think your animal is at risk (due to location or lifestyle—like hunting/camping/swimming in lakes), we would advise the vaccination series at this point.

Please reach out if you have any further questions or concerns or if you are in need of an appointment for vaccination.

Thank you for your time, and as always, we appreciate you so much and are constantly striving to make the most informed medical decisions for your precious pets.