



## Canine Influenza

### Background:

In 2004 a respiratory outbreak occurred in a racing greyhound kennel in Florida. There was a very high fatality rate amongst the affected dogs which spurred intense investigation into the cause of this outbreak. Results indicated that an influenza (flu) virus had mutated in a way that allowed it to jump from its usual equine (horse) host, to dogs. It is now believed that a secondary bacterial infection (*S. equi var. zooepidemicus*) caused the hemorrhagic pneumonias that actually caused the deaths of the affected dogs, but that the influenza infection opened the door to this deadly bacterial infection.

### Recent Experience:

Since the initial outbreak in 2004, sporadic Canine Influenza outbreaks have occurred across the US. These outbreaks have generally occurred in shelter situations, or other locations where dogs gather and/or are under stress. This primarily includes shelters and boarding facilities. There is NOT an epidemic of canine influenza at this time.

80% of exposed dogs will develop clinical symptoms, which include cough, sneeze, and runny nose in most cases. 20% of exposed dogs will not develop symptoms, but may still become carriers for the flu, spreading it to other dogs. 1-5% of exposed dogs develop more severe infections, including the previously mentioned secondary bacterial pneumonias, from which they can die.

The Canine Influenza virus is not infectious to humans, and does not appear to mutate on an annual basis as does the human influenza virus.

### New Vaccine:

In July 2009 a new vaccine against Canine Influenza was released by the Schering-Plough company. The vaccine does NOT prevent infection, but rather lessens the severity and duration of symptoms.

In order to achieve the most effective level of protection against Canine Influenza, a series of 2 vaccines must be given. The vaccines are given at a 3-4 week interval, and the recipient does not achieve maximum protection for at least 2 weeks after the second dose. This means that the vaccine series should be initiated at least 5 weeks BEFORE anticipated higher risk behaviors, like boarding or daycare visits. Annual booster vaccines are recommended by the manufacturer.



### **Our Recommendations:**

Louisville Family Animal Hospital will be offering the Canine Influenza vaccine starting on 10/21/09. We are recommending that dogs that visit doggy daycares or stay at boarding kennels on a regular basis receive the vaccine. The vaccine should also be considered for dogs that spend time at dog parks and grooming facilities. Essentially the same dogs that receive the Bordatella ("Kennel Cough") vaccine are candidates for the Canine Influenza vaccine.

Please call Louisville Family Animal Hospital for information on the cost of the vaccine series, to schedule appointments for vaccine administration or if you have additional questions regarding the vaccine. We suggest you contact your doggy daycare or boarding facility to ask if they are requiring the Canine Influenza vaccine prior to visits. Keep in mind that it takes a minimum of 5 weeks to complete the vaccine series and allow time for your dog to fully respond to the vaccines. This means that dogs that will be boarding during the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays need to start their vaccine series as soon as possible!