

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Update #143 - Canine Influenza - September 23, 2005

The purpose of this advisory is to notify veterinarians and other animal care providers about a story in Thursday's New York Times about canine influenza.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/22/national/22canine.html?th&emc=th>

In regards to this article the NYS Dept, of Agriculture and Markets has issued the following information:

Canine Influenza Virus Detected in Dogs in New York State

The Animal Health Diagnostic Center at Cornell has reason to believe that canine influenza virus is now present in the New York City area. Reports have been received indicating an unusual form of "kennel cough" has been seen in a number of veterinary practices. Six animals recovering from this clinical presentation are all serologically positive for canine influenza virus. Previous tests of New York State dogs have all been negative.

Canine influenza virus is a relatively new finding in dogs. It was first identified in racing greyhounds and this virus appears to have been the cause of significant respiratory problems on the tracks throughout the US for the last 5-6 years. The Virology Lab at Cornell isolated the first influenza virus from an animal that died from the infection. The virus was sequenced at CDC and was found to be closely related to equine influenza virus. Evidence of infection of non-greyhounds by influenza virus has been found in Florida for the past year.

A key factor in defining the significance of this infection in dogs is to obtain additional isolates so that sequencing can be done to determine whether the virus is evolving in the dog. We are requesting assistance in this endeavor from practitioners that have respiratory cases in dogs >1 year of age. Samples that we need are pharyngeal swabs taken from dogs at the onset of clinical signs (fevers of 39.5 to 41.5oC, a soft, gagging cough for 10 to 14 days). Samples for virus isolation taken late in the infection will not be useful for virus isolation. Swabs should be placed in a sterile tube (red top vacutainer for example) with 5-6 drops of sterile saline. Do not place swabs in bacterial transport medium. Ship samples overnight on ice packs. Samples will initially be screened by PCR for influenza virus. Positive samples will be processed for virus isolation. There will be no charge for the influenza screening at this time.

Acute and convalescent serum samples will also be helpful to define the extent of the infection in dogs. If one has cases of dogs that have recovered, a single serum sample can be used to determine exposure.

Should animals die of a respiratory infection, fresh and fixed tissue can be submitted for influenza virus screening.

Any questions regarding this matter should be directed to:

Dr. Edward Dubovi
Director-Virology Lab
607-253-3923
ejd5@cornell.edu

Samples should be shipped to:

Animal Health Diagnostic Center
College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell
Upper Tower Road
Ithaca, NY 14853