



Does your clinic carry the Canine Influenza vaccine?

Recently, Healthy Pet Veterinary Clinic decided to start offering the vaccination known as Nobivac Canine Flu which offers protection to dogs from the Influenza A virus numbered H3N8. This is a virus that affects only our canine companions and there is no concern of this disease passing to humans. While we don't expect this to be a vaccine that every dog owner

should consider, there are some of our patients that we feel will be at greater risk than others, including some our own pets.

What dogs are at the greatest risks? Much like people, those dogs that are very social and around a lot of other dogs will be in the highest risk category.

1. Foster homes for the different rescue groups and shelters. Of particular interest to me are the wonderful group of owners that serve as foster homes for various rescue groups and shelters. Their own dogs may be exposed to this virus through their work of having dogs temporarily stay at their house in the process of being adopted out. A particular heavily affected breed has been the racing Greyhound due to the large kennel situations that they are kept in during their racing careers. In 2005 twenty different tracks in eleven different states experienced outbreaks with as many as 80% of dogs present being affected. This all hits pretty close to home for me as my most recently adopted dog, Jasper, was an ex-racing greyhound that had just come up from Florida. Luckily, he showed no signs of influenza when we added him to our home, but it has really gotten me thinking about how easily that could have happened.
2. Boarding, grooming or doggie day care facilities. These very social settings are also at a high risk for a Canine Influenza outbreak. I do not know of any boarding facilities or doggie day care centers in the local area that require dogs be vaccinated with Canine Influenza at this time. However there are many of those facilities in other parts of the country that will require that protection before your dog is allowed to stay. If our area does seem to have a number of dogs showing signs of a respiratory illness, I have a strong suspicion that a lot of kennels will start requiring this vaccination as well.
3. Dogs that do a lot of traveling with their owners around the country. This is particularly true in the four states I listed previously. If you travel with your dog and may have to consider a night or two of boarding during that travel or a grooming appointment, you may want to check ahead of time with some of the local kennels and groomers. Even if you don't have to worry about kennels or groomers, keep highly affected areas in mind if your dog meets some new local friends and may be exposed to this virus.

So, what if you think that your dog is a candidate for this vaccine? First and most importantly, discuss this and any vaccinations you are considering with your veterinarian. If you both decided to vaccinate your dog(s) for Canine Influenza, plan on an initial vaccine series of two doses given 2 – 4 weeks apart. Unfortunately your dog will not have good enough immune response from just one dose, so be sure to plan adequate time to get both vaccine doses in before they are needed. If longer than 4 week lapses between the vaccines, you may have to start the series all over. As always, use common sense when you expose your dog to a new situation or new canine friends. If your dog is exposed to a dog that is acting ill, please consult your veterinarian as to what to look for and discuss possible treatment actions.

A special thank you goes out to my boy Jasper and Greyhounds everywhere. Consider adopting a 45 mile per hour couch potato! And Jasper, feel free to consider becoming a couch potato!