

# Canine flu has animal health officials on alert

## Canine flu symptoms

### Symptoms of mild infection include:

Productive cough for several weeks, with gag or swallow at the end (inexperienced caretakers may think the dog has something caught in their throat)

Sometimes foamy fluid or mucus is coughed up.

Mild fever and lethargy are typical, with no response to antibiotics.

Opaque to bloody nasal discharge may be present, due to secondary bacterial infection and inflammation of the blood vessels.

### Symptoms of severe infection include:

High fever (105-106 degrees)

Rapid breathing

Pneumonia

Coughing up blood and prolonged recovery.

*Source: Dr. Wendy Blount, Nacogdoches veterinarian.*

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**Canine flu has animal health officials on alert** By [Christine Broussard](#) [cbroussard@dailysentinel.com](mailto:cbroussard@dailysentinel.com) | 0 comments

An April outbreak of canine flu in Chicago has animal health officials on alert as a few positive cases of the infection have popped up around Texas.

Though none have been reported in Nacogdoches, health officials, including the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), are asking pet owners to be aware of the symptoms.

Those can include a cough, fever, lethargy, or a loss of appetite.

"Canine flu is very contagious," said Dr. Michael Connolly, Nacogdoches veterinarian. "If a dog has those type of symptoms, (owners) need to communicate that to the veterinarian before they take it in so that they don't expose dogs in the clinic."

### New strain

Considered endemic, or native, in New York, New Jersey, Florida and the Colorado-Wyoming border area, no canine flu large outbreaks have been reported in Texas.

Outbreaks that have occurred in other states seem to develop in areas where dogs gather: shelters, kennels, dog tracks, pet store and veterinary hospitals.

“Kennel Cough’ is the common term for canine upper respiratory infection,” said Dr. Wendy Blount of Nacogdoches. “Canine flu is one of the various causes of ‘kennel cough’ and is caused by influenza A virus. Until recently, canine flu was always H3N8, but the recent Chicago outbreak that brought at least one case to Texas was H3N2.”

Canine flu was first identified in racing greyhounds that died from pneumonia in Florida in 2003-2004, Blount said.

“Because the virus appears to be a pathogen that only relatively recently has begun to infect dogs, at this time most dogs are susceptible,” she said. “Few dogs in Texas have been vaccinated, and few have been exposed and infected.”

### **Morbidity vs. mortality**

Connolly said the mortality rate for pets infected with canine flu is low “if dogs are treated properly.”

Animals with an immune system that’s already compromised from any number of health reasons are more susceptible to develop severe or fatal conditions, he added.

Morbidity, or the chance of the dog becoming ill when exposed to the infection, is 80-90 percent, Blount added. Mortality, or infections that result in death, is 5 to 8 percent.

### **‘No contact with coughing dogs’**

Not all dogs with respiratory infection symptoms have canine flu. However, should symptoms develop, a veterinarian should be contacted and informed of the symptoms before being brought into the shelter.

“Canine flu is extremely rare in Texas, and there is no significant presence of the virus here, though that could change at any time,” Blount said. “The virus can either mutate from another flu virus to infect dogs, or be carried here by an infected dog from another area of the country or world.

“There is some evidence that cats can be infected with the H3N2 flu canine virus, but (there is) no evidence that people can be infected with either canine flu virus.”

Commercial vaccines available protect against H3N8 but doctors are unaware yet whether it protects against H3N2 — the newest strain of canine flu.

Blount said the best thing for dog owners to do now is avoid allowing their dogs contact with other pets that have been coughing for less than 10 days.

For more information, visit the AVMA website at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).