

# **Kyle Animal Hospital**

**www.kylevet.com**

**100 Hall Professional Center**

**Kyle, TX, 78640**

**(512) 268-5003**

This information is provided by Kyle Animal Hospital to supplement and facilitate, not replace, further research (internet-veterinarypartner.com is generally a reliable source, other pet health resources, and most importantly further communication with us). Your individual pet's case may vary from what information we provide, please never hesitate to contact our staff and/or the doctor on your pet's case if you have any further questions or concerns.

## **Canine Influenza**

### **What is Canine Influenza?**

Canine Influenza ("Dog Flu") was first recognized as a virus of dogs in racing Greyhounds in Florida in 2004. It is closely related to Equine Influenza ("Horse Flu") and there is no evidence that it is contagious to humans. It is a potentially serious disease of dogs, and in its worst case can be fatal. There is much, much more information available on Canine Influenza, any Google search will bring up numerous hits. A full description of Canine Influenza is beyond the scope of this information sheet, which is concerned with the position of Kyle Animal Hospital on the appropriate use of the vaccine.

### **Can you tell me more about the vaccine?**

There has been a vaccine for canine flu available for several years. This vaccine is based on the strain isolated in 2004. Unlike human flu vaccines, this flu vaccine strain does NOT change every year. So vaccinating dogs against the flu using this vaccine is much like vaccinating humans with the flu vaccine strain from 2004. Now to be fair, there is LESS variation in strains year to year with dog flu than with human--but we aren't certain about this. There has just been much less research in dog flu than in human flu.

In 2011, this vaccine was picked up by major vaccine manufacturers. These companies have many more resources for advertising and publicity than the previous vaccine manufacturer. We saw a corresponding spike in dog flu reports in the media in 2011, in a similar time frame to the vaccine's release by the major corporations.

### **How prevalent is dog flu?**

This is a very tough question. Because of the nature of the virus, it often goes undiagnosed. It is also very easy to over diagnose in the right circumstances. We are aware of several reported cases of the dog flu in the Austin-San Antonio corridor. There was apparently one veterinarian in San Antonio that diagnosed 20 cases over an unknown time frame. Because of the circumstances of the media frenzy surrounding this report, we are at this time considering those as unconfirmed and suspicious. Further discussion of these reported cases is best left to personal communication; if you have further questions about this please do not hesitate to ask.

We have not diagnosed a single case (as of November 2011) of the dog flu, nor are we aware of any confirmed cases in this area.

At this point, we are considering that any true problems with dog flu (if they occur) will center on areas of high dog concentration--boarding kennels, animal shelters, etc. Any true outbreaks will likely involve these areas first.

### **Should I vaccinate my dog for the flu?**

We cannot answer that question at this point. Information on this disease and the vaccine is rapidly changing. At this point we do carry the vaccine, but classify it as "special use" and will only use it after a thorough consultation with the owner. We are not recommending this vaccine across the board at this point. If you have a high risk dog (boards frequently, your boarding kennel suggested/required it, you anticipate your dog spending time in an animal shelter) then we recommend you research the disease and discuss it with us. Like many health care decisions, it is simply a judgment call at this point. You cannot predict if your dog will be exposed to the flu, and we cannot predict if your dog will have a reaction. Keep in mind that nothing we put into your dog's body is benign--everything, vaccines included, has the potential to cause harm. We must all carefully evaluate the risk/benefit of everything we do. The flu vaccine is no exception. As always, please never hesitate to contact us directly regarding this or any other issue.