What is canine influenza?
Influenza viruses have traditionally been found to affect birds and some mammals, including humans. In the summer of 2014, outbreaks of a respiratory disease were reported among racing greyhounds in the U.S. This virus had likely been circulating in horses before spreading to dogs. Today, canine influenza tends to be seen in animal shelters, kennels, dog day care facilities and other locations were dogs come into close contact with one another. In 2015 the first outbreak between pet dogs was reported and in 2016 three shelter cats were also identified with the H3N2 canine strain.

How do dogs get canine influenza?
It is most likely spread between dogs by aerosol droplets (coughing) or by a dog’s direct contact with contaminated surfaces. It is possible for an infected dog to have no outward signs of infection yet actively shed the virus. Depending upon the strain, an infected dog can spread the virus 7-10 days for strain H3N8 and up to 21 days for strain H3N2.

Can people get canine influenza?
To date there has been no evidence of dog-to-human transmission of this virus. People have been known to contract influenza from infected pigs and poultry, but this is extremely rare.

Is there a vaccine for my dog?
Yes, there is a commercially available canine vaccine in the U.S. Dogs visiting dog parks, housed in kennels, or attending show events should consider vaccination. Please consult your veterinarian to determine whether your dog should be vaccinated.

What are the clinical signs of infection in dogs?
There are two general clinical syndromes – a mild form and a severe pneumonic form. The milder type is commonly characterized by a cough that persists for 10 to 21 days, despite therapy with antibiotics and cough suppressants. Infected dogs can have nasal discharge and a low-grade fever. The severe type is characterized by pneumonia, high fever (104º to 106º F), and an increased respiratory rate. The mortality rate is 1 to 5%.

What should I do if I think my dog may have canine influenza?
Contact your veterinarian for information about diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and prevention.

Is it safe to take my dog to a dog park?
If your dog is healthy and has not had a recent respiratory infection pet owners should feel free to visit dog parks, kennels, or dog shows. You may want to talk to your veterinarian about vaccination if you frequent those locations.

How can I get my dog tested for the canine virus?
For canine influenza testing, please contact the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Nasal and nasopharyngeal swabs can be taken in the dogs that are acutely ill. Should dogs die of a respiratory infection, fresh and fixed tissue can be submitted for influenza virus screening. Ideally, samples should be collected on virus collection swabs with transport media (such as Stuart’s or Hank’s) or sterile swabs. Sterile swabs can be placed in a red top tube with 5 to 6 drops of sterile saline. Ship samples overnight on ice packs.

For additional submission guidelines, contact the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 612-625-8787 or 800-605-8787 or go to http://www.vdl.umn.edu/

Any laboratory-confirmed case of canine influenza must be reported to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-296-2942.

Additional Information:
- University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Iowa State Center for Food Security & Public Health

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated May 2016.