

# The Washington Post

## 1st Va. Dog Flu Cases Close Fairfax Kennel

By Dagny Salas  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
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Fairfax County authorities on Friday publicly confirmed at least six cases of the H3N8 virus, or canine influenza, in dogs, one of them fatal -- the first identified cases in the state.

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter shut down its kennel last week, quarantining about 26 dogs with suspected symptoms, said shelter director Karen Diviney. New dogs brought to the shelter are being held in a separate area.

Humans cannot contract the virus, commonly referred to as "dog flu," but dogs can easily catch it from each other, especially in close quarters, and it can be spread to dogs from humans who have come into contact with infected animals, officials said.

Owners are being encouraged to follow the same precautions as with strains of human influenza: Wash your hands, and do not panic.

"It's a situation where we do need to alert the public. Now it's out there, and people need to look for symptoms," said Lucy Caldwell, Fairfax police spokeswoman.

Symptoms include sneezing, lethargy, loss of appetite, coughing and wheezing, said Wanda Pool, a veterinarian at Deepwood Veterinary Clinic in Centreville. If a dog is showing these symptoms, owners are urged to contact their veterinarians for testing and possible vaccination.

The incubation period is 48 hours, meaning the virus can live on hard surfaces, hair and fabric, Pool said, adding that about 20 percent of infected dogs will not show symptoms.

Pool said about 11 dogs at Deepwood, which runs a boarding kennel as well as the veterinary clinic, suddenly came down with coughs in late July, which was unusual. Nasal swabs were taken and sent out to a lab, which confirmed canine flu in some of the cases. One of the dogs, a 15-year-old whippet owned by a clinic technician, died July 27 after contracting severe pneumonia, Pool said.

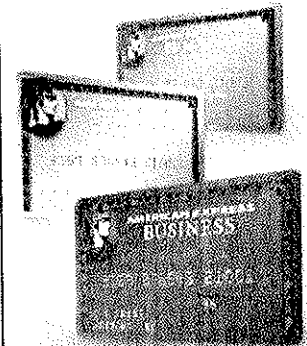
"Most dogs will be fine, just like in humans," Pool said. "A small percentage can't handle it and do get pneumonia, and it can get very severe."

The virus originated from a strain of equine influenza that mutated sometime in 2004. Since then, about 30 states have reported cases of dog flu, Pool said.

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# Flu closes kennels at county shelter

By Kali Schumitz

The dog kennels at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter will be closed for at least two weeks due to an outbreak of canine flu.

Only two cases have been confirmed through testing, but more than two dozen dogs at the shelter are showing symptoms of the highly contagious virus. Humans and animals other than dogs cannot get sick from canine flu.

"We do feel we have it contained and we've taken all of the steps we can to prevent it from spreading," said animal shelter director Karen Diviney.

A smaller kennel area is set up to house uninfected dogs, including those just coming in to the shelter. While they can't legally refuse to accept new animals, Diviney said shelter officials are urging people not to bring dogs to the shelter if they have any other options.

Michael Lucas, director of animal control for the Fairfax County Police Department, said officers are temporarily allowing dogs that bite someone to be confined at a home, vet or boarding facility during the required quarantine period, rather than at the shelter, to help keep the dog population at the shelter low.

There are signs that canine influenza is present in the broader community as well, said Dr. Wanda Pool, chief veterinarian at Deepwood Veterinary Clinic in Centreville, so dog owners should remain vigilant.

The clinic has confirmed three cases of canine influenza, in addition to the two from the shelter, one of which was fatal. A 15-year-old whippet named Bean, owned by a Deepwood staff member, died July 27 due to complications from pneumonia.

"We're very, very worried about this in the community," Pool said. She said dog owners should be careful about taking their dog to a dog park, doggie day care or boarding facility.

Canine influenza was first identified in 2004 and has been confirmed in 30 states now. Pool said this is the first time, to her knowledge, that the virus has been confirmed in Northern Virginia. A vet clinic in Sterling has also reported one confirmed case, she said.

Like the flu virus in humans, dogs can have a range of symptoms from the virus and most do not get seriously ill. Older dogs or dogs with other health problems are more likely to develop pneumonia or secondary infections that can cause more serious illness or death, Pool said.

Humans and other animals cannot get sick from the virus, but can help spread it if they have been in contact with a dog that is sneezing or coughing. The virus can live on surfaces or clothing for up to 48 hours, Pool said.