

ATTENTION: Canine Influenza Virus Cases in Local Shelter

Richmond Animal League has become aware of several suspected or confirmed cases of Canine Influenza (CIV H3N2) in another shelter in the Richmond area. Please read for more information.

What is Canine Influenza Virus (CIV)? CIV is a flu virus that can cause disease in dogs. CIV is spread through the transfer of viral particles. Dogs with CIV shed viral particles through coughing or direct nose-to-nose contact. For that reason, CIV is easily spread. The virus does not survive for long in the environment but can be carried on clothing, leashes, etc., for up to 24 hours. It can take up to 2 weeks to see symptoms after an exposure to CIV, and dogs can shed the virus for up to 4 weeks, even without obvious symptoms. The most common symptom is cough, but affected dogs may also display decreased appetite, nasal discharge, fever, and lethargy, and sometimes no signs at all. It can look very similar to “kennel cough.” Uncommonly, CIV can lead to more serious disease such as pneumonia. There is no specific treatment, and typically testing is not necessary as most dogs recover in 2-3 weeks with appropriate veterinary care. A vaccine against CIV is available for dogs and can help reduce illness and transmission.

How does RAL's Loving Spay + Neuter Clinic prevent the spread of infectious diseases like CIV?

- As always, all patients are kept in separate cages that are cleaned and disinfected with a virucidal agent between each patient. All surgery equipment is sterilized between each patient. Laundry is cleaned and disinfected between each patient.
- Patients do not come face-to-face with each other. Some dog cages do face each other but are about 7 feet apart. The fronts of these cages are covered to prevent coughing or sneezing from reaching other cages.
- We only accept clinically healthy patients for surgery, but we do see pets from all over, including from many other shelters, rescues, and private owners.
- The clinic does not require any vaccinations before a patient comes to our clinic, but we always recommend that all patients be fully vaccinated at least 2 weeks before coming for their appointment.
- Our staff practices good hygiene between patients.
- If we have a patient showing signs of CIV or other illness, the owner will be contacted immediately for pick up.

What can you do for your pet?

- Do not bring in any pet for surgery with obvious signs of disease. Contact us, and we'll be happy to reschedule.
- See your regular, full-service vet on a regular basis and follow their guidance on preventive vaccinations for your pet, including the CIV vaccine for dogs.
- **Contact your regular, full-service veterinarian if your pet is showing signs of CIV, especially if symptoms are moderate to severe (difficulty breathing, persistent cough, signs of fever) or if your pet is more susceptible to illness due to age or compromised immune status.**