

**An addendum to the article on Canine Influenza that was in the January newsletter –
by JP Yousha – former GDCA Health and Welfare Advisor**

I wanted to post a personal addendum to this, with some pragmatic, and unfortunately first-hand notes, as I had a 9 mo. old puppy contract this canine 'flu at the Elk City, OK shows and subsequently spent Xmas weekend hospitalized and on IVs. (Needless to say, it was a less than charming Xmas holiDAZE<ahem>.)

He's home now & off IVs at this point. We are watching him closely for a relapse, but essentially he seems fine now & should recover fully. But he was gravely ill over the weekend. He was at the shows in OK on Sat-Sun, came home to AZ with a soft cough (no discharge) on Tuesday. Was seen early a.m. by the vet on Thursday. His history (complete with ITB=kennel cough vaccines) was reviewed then, and he was, other than the cough, completely normal (eating, drinking, etc. temperature normal, etc.)

--JP explained in a separate email what she means by a "soft cough": "A "soft" cough (mucous laden; productive) as opposed to the sort of dry hacking "whoop" that you so often see with Bordetella is what I meant."

So it was assumed it was likely transitory, and innocuous, ITB (kennel cough). However by Sat (Xmas even) he had a violent fever (105+) with severe bacterial pneumonia showing in the Xray. He was then hospitalized, his owner (my co-owner & an MD), his vet and one of her nurses, taking around-the-clock shifts to medicate and care for him. He was on IVs for fluids and IV ABX to treat the 2dary bacterial infection, and assumably once his immune system got ahead of the virus and the ABX were on board to subdue the 2dary bacterial infection, he rapidly recovered. He was gravely ill the 24th & the 25th, with a WBC#>35,000 and a fever of over 105 (lethargic, inappetite, all the rest), but staggered up on Monday (fever essentially gone, attitude back), and has been better every day since.

We sent samples off to Cornell to confirm canine influenza. The puppy dog is heart normal and the fungal cultures (they have Valley Fever endemic there) are negative, and the pattern suggests really canine flu and nothing else in any case.

Had my puppy owner not done this & acted aggressively when he spiked a fever, he might well be dead. He saw the vet on Thursday and was clinically normal in every way but for this simple cough (and he never had any sort of nasal discharge). They were therefore astonished how ill he was on Saturday as they didn't expect this turn of events apparently.

He had had ITB VX earlier, I wasn't confident it was just kennel cough, & I vocalized my concern about canine 'flu to my puppy buyer/co-owner. She agreed to treat the case suspiciously all the same, and not to let the holidays get in the way of monitoring him. It was astonishing to all how rapidly he became so terribly ill (and not altogether surprising he has rapidly recovered, although I know of several cases where the animals didn't get ahead of the pneumonia and died of cardiac arrest and pulmonary edema).

Not to play arm-chair coach after the fact, but I think one thing I learned from this is that this might well be a situation where prophylactic ABX is warranted. We know so little about canine influenza; but I am certainly NOT criticizing the vet clinic. What they did made sense at the time. And the vet and nurse and my co-owner took shifts over the Christmas weekend so Voltaire was never much alone and was monitored and cared for constantly. So he wasn't moved to some other facility with strangers, or shuffled around, or home care attempted, as these three people dedicated their holiday weekend to seeing him through this crisis.

It took a great deal of work, mostly nursing-level care, to get him thru the weekend. But the supportive RX (IV fluids, IV ABX for the 2dary, nebulizers, etc.) seemed to give him a chance to fight off the virus. Happily my joke about my dogs is true: I always say "you cannot kill them with a rock," and this is just one more example of their inherent robustness....happily!

But I think I would myself suggest any dog with a soft cough (with or without any nasal or ocular discharge) be put on prophylactic oral ABX (e.g. Clavamox) and have the temperature monitored twice daily & be closely watched for any signs of developing pneumonia. At least the latter ought to be a

watchword for us now this canine "rhino" has emerged. And we ought also be more circumspect than in the past about taking dogs with cough and/or eye/nasal discharge to shows.

It's not a case anymore that normal dogs are not going to die of ITB (kennel cough); with canine flu at least 80% will fall ill and up to 10% will die. I know many who have seen their promising show pups not survive, so am grateful mine was able to recover. And I can only hope this message is a useful "heads-up" to the next person looking at a coughing puppy...wondering "could this only be....or....?" Think "or" and treat aggressively is my advice.

Hope all your Xmas were less harried than mine! jp Best regards, JP Yousha

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In response to an email asking a couple questions about this, here is what JP added.

I don't think anyone can project much at this point about a vaccine being developed, as there is so much involved in that. However the good news I heard is that the canine 'flu doesn't appear to be like that in humans, in that it doesn't seem to be mutating rapidly, so that means a durable vaccine is at least possible. And dogs are rapidly becoming immune to it through exposure.

My boy, for example, inoculated the dogs in his household (if inadvertently), so now all three are immune. And clearly lots of dogs, one way or another, got exposed at that show...and others....for, as dogs move about the country, the virus is spread. That may sound bad but means a lot of dogs are now safe from being re-infected.

Another positive thread is viral infections that "jump" species like this (this was equine rhino in origin apparently) tend to start off highly virulent, then "mellow" with time. That makes sense from the virus' point of view (if a nucleotide particle can have a perspective on things), as you really don't want to kill or even necessarily debilitate your host, you just want to use them as a vehicle to spread your genes. So the bottom line is, one way or another, this thing is likely to become less of a threat over the next few years.

But it's also the case that young animals who have "naive" immune systems, elderly dogs who have blunted immune systems, and dogs ill or otherwise with compromised immune systems are STILL going to be highly susceptible to the morbidity and potential mortality associated with canine influenza. So the old adage my pilot and surgeon father taught me about "VIEW WITH ALARM SO YOU CAN POINT WITH PRIDE," likely applies here and will for some time. jp

Best regards, JP Yousha