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**FLU OUTBREAK IN TEXAS...** Canine Influenza Virus, also known as CIV or H3N8, is a recently mutated flu virus that affects dogs. First identified in 2004, the virus has now spread to 38 states including Texas. A major outbreak in San Antonio involving 70-80 dogs occurred in late August, and there have been confirmed cases in Austin and Dallas as well. This disease is highly contagious between dogs; because this is a new viral strain, virtually 100% of dogs are at risk of infection.

CIV can be spread by dogs (some showing signs, some not), contaminated surfaces, and on human hands and clothing. 80% of infected dogs show symptoms of high fever (104-106), runny nose, cough, and increased respiratory effort; 1 in 10 of these will progress to serious illness, pneumonia, and even death. This is not a seasonal infection as the human variation; people and other species cannot be infected with CIV. Clinical signs develop 2-4 days after infection and last 2-3 weeks. There is a specific test for this virus, but it must be done during the early stages of illness to be accurate.

Since the virus now has shown a strong presence in Texas and dogs do not have natural immunity to this emerging disease, we are now recommending vaccination of all of our canine patients. Due to the highly contagious nature of the disease as well as the potential for serious illness or death if infected, we do not believe that any segment of the dog population is truly free from exposure risk.

Fortunately, a safe and effective vaccine has been developed, and simply involves an initial vaccine followed by a booster 4 weeks later, then an annual booster. Effective immediately, we are requiring vaccination for all of our canine boarders to protect all of our guests during their stay. Pets at highest risk are those who board, are groomed, or spend time in public areas (walk in the park or neighborhood, trips to the pet store). Also at high risk are outdoor dogs without solid perimeter fencing, young pets and senior pets.

Vaccination is an important part of preventative care, and we are fortunate to have a vaccine for this disease available to help protect our patients against this potentially life threatening virus. We will have this vaccine available beginning September 26, and encourage all dog owners to make an appointment to update their pet's protection as soon as possible.

