



Mysterious Canine Respiratory Illness in the United States: Understanding Atypical Canine Respiratory Disease

Overview

Recent news reports have highlighted a significant outbreak of an unknown respiratory illness affecting dogs across various U.S. states, including Oregon, California, Colorado, Georgia, Florida, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. This article aims to provide pet owners and healthcare providers with essential insights into what has been reported and the realities of this situation.

What's Being Reported?

Veterinary experts, notably from Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (NHVDL), are investigating a suspected outbreak. The cause is currently unidentified, but initial investigations hint at a non-culturable, bacterial-like organism in some cases. However, this is yet to be confirmed through further research.

Realities Beyond the News

It is crucial to understand that these incidents are not entirely new and have been observed for over a year. No causative organism has been definitively identified after extensive investigations. Incidence rates of respiratory diseases in dogs have not shown significant variations, apart from the expected increase due to more frequent social interactions among dogs. The symptoms and progression of this illness resemble those of Canine Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC), often called Kennel Cough, including severe cases leading to death.

CIRDC: A Closer Look

CIRDC, a prevalent multi-organism disease complex, includes pathogens like canine adenovirus type 2, coronavirus, distemper, herpes, parainfluenza, Bordetella, mycoplasma, and other secondary bacterial pathogens. Increased socialization and visits to dog parks, which are hotspots for contagion, have naturally led to higher exposure rates.

Reported Symptoms

Dogs affected by this illness exhibit symptoms akin to CIRDC, including coughing, sneezing, eye and nose discharge, lethargy, decreased appetite, and fever. Most CIRDC infections are mild and self-limiting, but concerns arise from a subset of cases that show severe symptoms unresponsive to standard treatments.

Recommendations for Dog Owners

Vigilance for Symptoms: Monitor for signs of respiratory illness and seek veterinary care if symptoms appear.

Avoid Dog-to-Dog Contact: Limit interactions, especially in communal areas like dog parks.

Isolation and Quarantine: Adhere to standard procedures for dogs showing respiratory signs.

Vaccinations: Ensure up-to-date vaccinations, including DHPP, Bordetella bronchiseptica, and canine influenza virus.

Should You Worry?

There is no need for panic. Current evidence does not suggest the emergence of a new pathogen. Veterinarians nationwide are experienced in dealing with respiratory illnesses in dogs.

Diagnostic and Treatment

Consult veterinarians for appropriate testing, such as respiratory PCR panels. Treatment depends on the severity, with mild cases often resolving independently and severe cases requiring hospitalization.

Ongoing Research and Updates

Research continues, and veterinary institutions are vigilantly monitoring the situation. Dog owners and practitioners should stay informed through updates from credible sources.

Contact Information

For more information or to report cases, contact local veterinarians or refer to updates from institutions like Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.

Transmission Prevention

Due to limited knowledge about the disease, specific microbial cleaning recommendations are challenging. However, general guidelines include thorough cleaning and the use of EPA-approved disinfectants with “Emerging Viral Pathogen Claims” and liquid surface sterilizers.

Summary

While the exact cause of these infections remains undetermined, a new pathogen remains a possibility. However, it's equally plausible that the observed increase in cases is due to known viruses and bacteria that cause respiratory infections in dogs.

This bulletin provides a condensed overview of the current situation and recommendations. For detailed information and updates, consult veterinary health institutions' websites and communications.

Sources: Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida's Shelter Medicine Program, New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

