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PRESS RELEASE

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CANINE INFLUENZA IN CALIFORNIA

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – Canine Influenza, or dog flu, is a highly contagious virus that is garnering more attention in the news lately with a recent outbreak in the San Francisco Bay area. According to Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, there have been 72 reports of canine flu in California in the past 1.5 months. There have not been any reported confirmed cases in Santa Barbara County, although there have been several cases in San Luis Obispo County.

Symptoms of the disease include fever, cough, sneezing, nasal discharge, lethargy, and loss of appetite. Some dogs do not show any symptoms. Most dogs recover with basic supportive care in 2-3 weeks, but more severe illness can occur. Serious complications and deaths are usually related to secondary pneumonia.

Canine flu is spread by direct contact with respiratory secretions and/or contact with contaminated items such as bowls or toys. The virus can survive for 1-2 days on hard surfaces. Canine flu can spread rapidly at boarding facilities, groomers, doggie day cares, dog parks, and other places where dogs co-mingle. The virus can be shed by dogs for up to 24 days, including after the dog no longer is showing signs of illness. There is no evidence that canine influenza can be spread to humans.

Owners should keep their pets up to date on vaccines, take animals to their veterinarian if they are sick, and not take their dogs in public or to places where they will encounter other dogs if they are showing signs of illness. Pet owners should also discuss the canine influenza vaccine with their veterinarian, and decide whether vaccinating their dog for the virus is recommended.

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