



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Mary Tiefenbrunn
Executive Director
director@cuhumane.org
217-344-7297

Champaign County Humane Society Postpones IL MUTTathon

Urbana, IL - The Champaign County Humane Society is postponing its annual dog walk fundraising event to prevent any chance of contributing to a local outbreak of Canine Influenza Virus (CIV).

The IL MUTTathon has been rescheduled for Saturday, June 6, and relocated to Centennial Park in Champaign. Supporters who have already registered to attend the event are being notified directly.

The Humane Society is also suspending dog training classes until further notice.

Although Champaign County is not experiencing an endemic outbreak of CIV, cases have now been confirmed in Chicago's outlying suburbs. Champaign County Humane Society Executive Director, Mary Tiefenbrunn, hopes that "by taking precautions now, we can prevent an outbreak from occurring here."

While the Humane Society is disappointed about postponing one of its biggest annual fundraising events, Development Director, Megan Wolf, said this was a "no-brainer" after Shelter Veterinarian, Dr. Bob Weedon, explained the risks and the precautionary measures being recommended by the veterinary community. "The well-being of dogs has to come first," Wolf said.

The decision to postpone rather than cancel is based on optimism, According to Wolf. "We're hoping that we don't experience a local CIV outbreak and that Dr. Weedon gives us a green light in June. We'll just have to wait and see." Wolf also said the IL MUTTathon sponsors have been very supportive of the Humane Society's decision to postpone. "Our sponsors understand that we have to do what's best for the community."

As for the dog-owning community, Tiefenbrunn hopes local dog owners will follow the news on CIV and exercise caution when it comes to allowing their dogs

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to interact with others. "It's pretty safe to let your dog interact with his dog friends if none of the dogs have been in the vicinity of other dogs with unknown history," Tiefenbrunn said. "But if your dog's friend has recently been to a dog park, or even to a vet clinic where a dog with the virus sneezed in the waiting room, there is a chance that he was exposed to the virus. And now he could be contagious, *even if he appears healthy.*"

According to Dr. Weedon, Tiefenbrunn's scenario illustrates how the virus spreads so quickly. "With this strain of CIV, dogs are most contagious during the incubation period; that is, before they develop clinical signs," Weedon said. "In addition, this virus retains its ability to infect in the environment for many hours. It survives on surfaces for up to 48 hours, clothing for 24, and on an unwashed human hand, up to 12 hours," Weedon explained.

The Humane Society advises dog owners to contact a veterinarian promptly if their dogs show signs of CIV. See list of recommendations and symptoms on page 3.

Facts About Canine Influenza Virus

The CIV outbreak in Chicago was of a new strain, H3N2, previously not seen outside parts of Asia.

The CIV vaccine currently available protects against the H3N8 strain. It may help reduce the severity of symptoms, but its efficacy against H3N2 is not yet known.

Dogs are most contagious (capable of spreading the disease) *before* they appear sick.

The virus remains viable in the environment (on surfaces, clothing, and human hands) for 12 to 48 hours.

Contact your veterinarian if your dog displays symptoms of CIV:
Coughing, sneezing, fever, runny nose (nasal discharge can be clear to yellowish-greenish), eye discharge, rapid breathing, difficulty breathing, Cyanosis (blue-tinged gums), decreased appetite, lethargy, collapse.

Most dogs recover in 2-3 weeks, but some dogs do become very seriously ill. Treatments are largely supportive in nature.

Prevention Tips for Dog Owners

Be aware of high-risk areas. Dog parks, dog friendly stores, dog day care, boarding kennels, grooming facilities, and even veterinary waiting rooms are all places where the virus could be transmitted.

When in contact with multiple dogs, wash your hands frequently and remove and wash any clothing that may have had contact with dogs' mouths, noses, or eyes.

Don't travel with your dog to areas where CIV outbreaks are occurring.

Talk to your vet about the CIV vaccine.

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