**for immediate release**

**respiratory INFECTIOUS DISEASE Threatens Chicago Dogs**

*New information and warnings for area dog owners and veterinarians.*

**CHICAGO, April 2, 2015...**Chicago is experiencing a serious outbreak of Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease (CIRD). Although testing for many of the dogs has come back positive for Canine Influenza Virus (CIV), veterinarians at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center ([www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com)) are concerned that other viruses and bacteria may also be involved. They encourage pet owners and veterinarians to be aware of the situation and to take appropriate action to protect area dogs.

"We are currently seeing an unusually large number of cases of Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease in dogs and their situation is much more severe than we would typically expect,” said Dr. Jerry Klein, supervising veterinarian at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center. “We don’t typically see such a large number of cases, and some of these cases are so severe that they require hospitalization. A few dogs have not survived.”

**Symptoms of respiratory illness**

The first indication that a dog has a respiratory illness is a persistent, dry cough or "honking" sound in a dog's throat.

**When to seek veterinary medical attention**

Dog owners should seek immediate veterinary attention if their dog exhibits the following symptoms:

* A cough that doesn’t clear up after a few days
* A cough that is accompanied by any of the following:
  + Lethargy (unwillingness to play/interact)
  + Lack of appetite
  + Fever
  + Vomiting
  + Rapid breathing

“Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease is highly contagious and can be easily transmitted from dog-to-dog,” said Dr. Anne Cohen, a board-eligible criticalist at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center. “This disease outbreak is easily spread through direct dog-to-dog contact and through contact with contaminated objects or through the air without direct contact.”

**Places where respiratory disease is spread**

Respiratory disease and kennel cough are easily spread anywhere dogs congregate including:

* Dog parks
* Dog beaches
* Dog day care
* Grooming facilities
* Pet stores
* Boarding facilities

“Although many cases of respiratory disease can be treated at home, this strain of illness is very serious and can lead to complications such as pneumonia,” said Dr. Cohen. “We urge pet owners to minimize their dog’s exposure to other dogs.”

**Vaccinations**

Vaccinations for Bordetella (also known as Kennel Cough) and for Canine Influenza are available and may be effective in helping curb the spread of the disease. Due to the widespread nature of the disease, pet owners and veterinarians should consider vaccinating dogs even if they are not typically at risk.

To minimize the spread of the disease, pet owners should call their veterinarian or veterinary emergency hospital before arriving to learn what procedures to follow when bringing their pet to the hospital.

**Infographic**

To help spread the news about the dangers of the current respiratory infection, Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center has created an infographic to provide key information about the illness to dog owners. It is available on their website at [www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com) . It can be provide in a variety of formats for printing and for use on the internet.

**Media availability**

Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center will make veterinarians available for interviews for credentialed members of the media.

**About Chicago Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Center**

**(**[**www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com**](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com)**)**

Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center provides advanced emergency, critical and specialty care for cats and dogs. Each year, the center treats more than 11,000 cats and dogs in its state-of-the-art emergency room, and thousands more are cared for by veterinary specialists.

Staffed by highly trained specialists and equipped with the latest technology, Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center is always open – 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

In addition to emergency veterinarians and staff, the facility offers board-certified veterinarians who specialize in cardiology, dentistry, dermatology, diagnostic imaging, internal medicine, neurology, oncology, ophthalmology and surgery. This state-of-the-art facility includes ultrasound and MRI equipment, specialized surgical suites, a blood bank, specialized oxygen cages, heart monitors and more. A cancer and rehabilitation center is located across the street. Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center has been providing emergency care for cats and dogs since 1978.

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