

## Increased Canine Distemper Detected in Chicago

Chicago Animal Care and Control (ACC) has continued to detect canine distemper in Chicago and is recommending distemper vaccinations for all uninoculated dogs. ACC has detected a possible seventy six cases of distemper in dogs since April 2004.

Canine Distemper is a serious disease that is easily spread; it is caused by Canine distemper virus (CDV), which is a virus closely related to the Measles virus. CDV is most often transmitted through the air (airborne transmission), usually through droplet exposure from the nasal cavity, lungs, pharynx and tears of an infected animal. The virus is also present in feces and urine. Distemper is fatal about 50% of the time in dogs, and dogs that recover often develop permanent brain and other damage at a later time.

Dogs that have not been properly vaccinated against CDV are especially at risk for distemper when they are walked in public areas such as parks or when they come into contact with other dogs.

Pet owners living near wooded areas and pet owners whose animal spend extended periods of time outdoors should also be concerned with increased potential for wildlife contact. Distemper can be carried and spread by wildlife to pet dogs. Wolves, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, ferrets, and other carnivores can spread canine distemper. Urban sprawl has created a loss of habitat increasing human and pet contact with wildlife. The result is a need for greater education and caution regarding wildlife, the disease they may carry, and how to protect people and pets from these threats.

John A. Lednicky, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pathology at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, states, "The scope of distemper outbreaks can be large. For example, over 10,000 Caspian seals died of this disease in the year 2000. Since there is no cure for distemper, veterinarians can only alleviate a sick animal's suffering."

Chicago Veterinary Medical Association and Chicago Animal Care and Control is recommending that pet owners in the Chicagoland area take these reports seriously and check to be certain that their animals are current on vaccinations against distemper and other viral disease. Consult your veterinarian to see if a vaccination or booster is appropriate for your pet.

Animal Care and Control, along with members of the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association have formed a task force of veterinarians, experts on contagious disease, and Animal Control Offices to further research this problem and to work on an effective plan for managing the disease in the dogs of Chicago and surrounding suburbs.

If you have a case of canine distemper, please contact the offices of the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association **(630-325-1231)** immediately so information may be provided to the Taskforce and the Consortium for Comparative Medicine.