TUFTS CUMMINGS SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Your Dog

The Newsletter for Caring Dog Owners

DON'T PANIC DOG FLU

Elizabeth Rozanski, DVM, a specialist in emergency and critical care at the Cummings School, has this advice for owners worried about canine influenza: *"Don't panic. The flu in people and dogs has high morbidity - many get sick - but it has very, very low mortality."*

As of this writing, outbreaks of the virus, which began in horses and crossed to racing Greyhounds and other dogs, have been identified in a half dozen states, including Florida, New York and Washington. Few deaths from complications, such as pneumonia, have been reported.

However, owners should limit their dog's exposure the same as they would with any other infectious disease, Dr. Rozanski said. "Avoid high volume boarding kennels and pet store puppies. Very old, very young dogs and immunosuppressed dogs - from chemotherapy, diabetes or prednisone - are at risk. Dog parks should be fine. They tend to cater to dog lovers who take good care of their dogs."

The signs are coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge and loss of appetite. Treatment consists of supportive care. Assessing the public health impact, Dr. Rubin Donis of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a briefing that horses have had equine influenza virus for more than 40 years. "In all these years, we have never been able to document a single case of human infection with this virus."

Said Dr. Rozanski: *"The informed owner will recognize this is a minor crisis unlikely, except in rare circumstances, to cause problems."* Updated information appears regularly at http://www.diaglab.vet.cornell.edu/news.asp.