

Kennel and Boarding Safety Recommendations



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—EDWARD DUBOVI, PHD

Experts Offer Advice on Best Practices

AAHA staff report

According to the American Pet Products Association, more than \$60 billion was spent on pets in the United States in 2015. Of that, more than \$5 billion was spent on grooming and boarding. To remain competitive in this market, pet professional businesses must keep pet owners happy, and that means keeping their pets happy and healthy.

A recent discussion among veterinary professionals and experts, featured on the VetFolio website and sponsored by Merck Animal Health, resulted in several recommendations related to pet care and safety for pet professional businesses, such as kennels, veterinary facilities, doggie daycares, dog walkers, groomers, and training facilities.

What follows is an overview of the web conference, titled “Pet Professionals Best Practices Consensus Statement,” which is available on the VetFolio website. Each expert on the panel offered an opinion on best practices, which are summarized in the box on page 60, Key Recommendations.

Canine Infectious Disease

Edward Dubovi, PhD, professor of virology and director of the Virology Section at the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Center College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University

Canine infectious respiratory diseases are predominantly a disease of social dogs in kennels, shelters, daycares, and dog parks. The new canine influenza virus H3N2 is more pathogenic—or a bit more able to cause disease—in dogs than we have seen with the H3N8 virus previously, and the virus can shed from infected dogs for more than 20 days.

As with human flu, the dogs may be infectious days before they even show signs of illness. Due to the way this particular virus spreads, we are encouraging veterinarians and other animal health workers to be cautiously aware of the fact that these viruses can spread very rapidly, especially in a kennel situation.

Surveillance through diagnostic testing in the dog population is really critical. This helps support vaccination recommendations as these viruses move throughout the country.

Vaccination Guidelines

Ronald Schultz, PhD, DACVM *honorary, professor of veterinary immunology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Veterinary Medicine*

The AAHA and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association guidelines place canine vaccines into three categories. The recommended or core vaccines should be given to every dog and puppy. The optional non-core vaccines are only given to dogs that are at risk or under special circumstances, and then there are vaccines that the AAHA and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association committees do not recommend. It is important to

note that vaccination is a medical decision that should entail the same considerations and reasoning skills required when selecting an appropriate medical treatment or a specific surgical procedure.

The canine core vaccines are canine distemper virus, canine parvovirus-2, canine adenovirus-2, and rabies. Vaccines in the non-core or optional category are those for viruses (canine parainfluenza and canine influenza virus—H3N8, H3N2); for bacteria (*Bordetella bronchiseptica*, *Leptospira*); and for Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*).

Core Vaccines for Dogs

Rabies

Canine distemper

Parvovirus

Canine adenovirus type 2 (hepatitis)

My goal for immunization programs would be to vaccinate more animals in the population. I'm trying to get population immunity—and if you have population immunity, you can markedly reduce the likelihood of any animals getting infected with these particular agents. For non-core vaccines, you need to decide whether that animal is at risk—and if it is, make sure it gets vaccinated.

Social dogs, including those that are boarded, groomed, group-trained, or group-walked, are at more risk of infectious disease. Social dogs should be vaccinated against infectious respiratory diseases, including *Bordetella*, adenovirus type 2, parainfluenza virus, and

both types of canine influenza virus (H3N2 and H3N8). Leptospirosis is a very serious disease that can affect dogs and humans; at-risk dogs should be vaccinated with this vaccine as well.

Recommended Vaccines to Prevent Infectious Respiratory Disease

Canine influenza—H3N8 and H3N2

Bordetella

Parainfluenza virus

Canine adenovirus type 2 (respiratory)

Personal Story of H3N2 Outbreak: Infectious Respiratory Disease Outbreak in a Shelter

Brenda Dines, DVM, veterinarian with the Calumet Area Humane Society, Munster, Indiana

One sick dog came into our facility and within a short time, all of the 100 dogs in our shelter were sick. Diagnostic testing confirmed H3N2 canine influenza. The spread of the disease was very rapid; even some of our cats became sick and also tested positive for canine influenza.

During our outbreak of H3N2, we reached out to local veterinarians, shelters, and animal facilities early to let them know our concerns about what we thought was occurring.

We also contacted the media, which is something we wanted to do on our own terms. We wanted to be transparent and to make sure that they knew that we were handling this outbreak responsibly.



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—RONALD SCHULTZ, PHD, DACVM

These events helped us with reassessment of the shelter as a whole in that we learned what our capacity of care should be. We also further reassessed our sanitation and isolation protocols, so we can inhibit some of the spread of disease through the shelter in the future.

Personal Story of H3N2 Outbreak: Infectious Respiratory Disease Outbreak in a Kennel

Michael Mayer, owner of Hip Hounds Kennel in Round Rock, Texas

We had an outbreak of H3N2 canine influenza in our boarding facility and nearly every client dog—as many as 60—was sick. My own dogs even became sick. This happened around Thanksgiving in 2015, which affected us during our busiest winter holiday season.

The most important thing during our outbreak was communicating with

our clients. Our goal was to be 100 percent transparent: to tell clients exactly when it happened and how it happened. It was really important for us to give generous timeframes for exposure, meaning the dogs that were there before it happened and those that were out but could have been affected by it. It was also really important for us to tell clients when they could come back safely. We learned quickly not to be defensive or secretive, but to share the information and be empathetic. It's also really important to follow up. I made a lot of phone calls, making sure that our clients knew that we cared about their needs and their dogs' health.

Sanitation Recommendations

Melissa Bourgeois, DVM, PhD, DACVM (virology, immunology), senior drug safety specialist at Merck Animal Health and veterinarian at Banfield Pet Hospital, Cumming, Georgia

Proper sanitation is key for any pet business to help prevent the spread of infectious disease. Before spraying any disinfectant, you must first remove organic debris by sweeping, wiping the area up, then cleaning with a detergent or a degreaser. After cleaning, rinse and then disinfect by applying the appropriate disinfectant. Let the disinfectant sit for the appropriate contact time, usually about 10 minutes. Disinfectants must have contact time to be effective. Then rinse and dry—drying is important because a lot of microorganisms can survive in a moist, humid environment.

When cleaning the floors, spraying is superior because it does not contaminate the disinfectant. But if you don't have drainage, use the two-bucket system for mopping—a bucket of clean water and a bucket of disinfectant—so there's a rinse set between disinfecting and putting the mop back in the disinfectant without contaminating it.

Ambient conditions matter when it comes to disinfection—UV light, temperature, and humidity. The concentration and contact time of disinfectants matter; the use of detergent before applying disinfectant matters; how you store the disinfectant and the type of surface you use it on matter. You should never mix disinfectants because this can have serious consequences in the formation of toxic compounds.

Keep in mind when you are disinfecting that all areas need to be cleaned beforehand, including the cage, the materials in the cage, the floor outside the cage, and the floor throughout your facility, as well as the waiting room, the dog runs, and the yard.

Humans are most commonly responsible for spreading respiratory disease, diarrhea, or any kind of infectious disease. If you are handling infected dogs, all office spaces, storage areas, ventilation and heating ducts, as well as frequently handled items—pens, cellphones, doorknobs, light switches, keyboards, and computer mice—need to be disinfected.

When you need to set up an isolation and quarantine facility, consider those dogs sick and potentially shedding. If you don't have an isolation room, use physical barriers. It is preferable to use separate ventilation, so the air flow of the rooms with infectious diseases is not mixed with that of the rest of the facility.

The bare minimum in personal protective equipment in an isolation and quarantine situation is a gown, double gloves, and dedicated shoes. Scrubs should be washed using a hot cycle with bleach and detergent—specifically, the clothes should be held at 130 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 5 minutes, or 108 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 10 minutes. Drying will also kill a lot of microorganisms. Handwashing should include at least 20 seconds of scrubbing and drying.

Communicating with Clients and Media

Carmen Rustenbeck, CEO of the International Boarding & Pet Services Association

Media, both social and print, provide you the opportunity to share what you are passionate about. Emphasize the quality of information shared over the

quantity, and monitor the responses from your customers. Use that monitoring information to create new content and further experiential reach. By consistently presenting quality information, you will build relationships and credibility with your customers that will serve you well when a crisis hits. Invite your clients to informational presentations about pet topics to bond with them and become pet care professionals for your clients.

In any crisis, the best practice response should include the “5 Cs”—compassion, control, concern, commitment, and communication. Our voice should have the tone of *compassion* and *concern*, and our words should clearly *communicate* our *commitment* to resolving the situation and what we are doing to *control* it. The best practice is to respond as quickly as possible, and be proactive rather than reactive in our communications.

Always review yourself and your operation—what did you do well, what could you do better, what training needs do you have, how can you prevent this from happening in the future, how can you turn this negative into a plus? By answering each of these questions, you are able to evaluate your procedures and responses to a customer, make improvements, and use those improvements as another way to talk about what sets your business apart from all the others and to build trust with your customers.

Managing Legal Issues

Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton, attorney and mediator, and author of *Nipped in the Bud, Not in the*

Butt: How to Use Mediation to Resolve Conflicts over Animals

For everybody outside the state of New York, the following is legal information, not legal advice.

Seek legal advice before setting up your business as a sole proprietor, partnership, or corporate entity, and understand your personal liabilities.



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—MELISSA BOURGEOIS, DVM, PHD, DACVM

Every business should have business owner insurance and, in the case of a veterinary business, also malpractice insurance.

If you hire personnel, you need to know which questions you can and cannot ask. Letting people go requires extensive documentation.

Set up expectations that your employees can meet, communicate those expectations, and review them together. It is important for staff to have their questions answered and for you to ascertain whether everyone has a clear understanding of what you're asking of them.

Always ask for feedback from your staff and your clients. Create a proactive checklist—I call it “nipping the conflict in the bud” because that’s what you want to do. Distribute client questionnaires before and after their visit.

In the event of negative feedback on social media, ask for offline communication rather than sending a “cease and desist” letter.

Addressing issues when they arise and appreciating how somebody else heard what you said can help you avoid potential conflicts. If a conflict does arise, you have to address the conflict—and you want to be proactive

in settlement venues. You might want a mediator, who addresses this confidentially, to save your practice from the angst of litigation.

From Consensus to Action

The goal of the “Pet Professionals Best Practices Consensus Statement” is to provide expert recommendations for pet care and safety for pet professional businesses, such as kennels, veterinary facilities, doggie daycares, dog walkers, groomers, and training facilities.

Infectious disease is a topic many pet professionals will need to address in their careers, and it is imperative to remember that prevention is

Key Recommendations

Through this discussion, the following have been agreed upon as appropriate actions for pet kennels and boarding facilities seeking to ensure the highest standard of animal care and safety, as well as client service, in light of newly emergent infectious diseases, such as the H3N2 respiratory virus.

- All dogs should receive vaccinations against core canine infectious diseases, such as distemper, adenovirus type 2, parvovirus infections, and rabies, according to the recommendations of AAHA and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA).
- All dogs should be evaluated based on their unique lifestyle and vaccinated in accordance with the AAHA and WSAVA vaccination guidelines.
- Social dogs, including those that are boarded, groomed, group-trained, or group-walked, are at higher risk for infectious respiratory diseases. Social dogs should be vaccinated against infectious respiratory diseases caused by *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, adenovirus type 2, parainfluenza virus, and both types of canine influenza virus (H3N2 and H3N8).
- For the best protection, all vaccination series should be finished at least two weeks before visiting boarding kennels, doggie daycares, training facilities, or other multidog events.
- Isolate immediately any dog that shows any signs of infectious disease, such as lethargy, loss of appetite, fever, coughing, or diarrhea.
- Provide veterinary care to pets showing signs of illness.
- Do not groom, group-walk, or group-train sick dogs! Inform your clients about not accepting sick dogs beforehand and provide alternative care options, such as a pet sitter.
- If you're dealing with an outbreak of infectious respiratory disease, reach out to local veterinarians, shelters, and animal facilities, and be transparent about your efforts to handle the outbreak. Communicate with your clients, share information, and be empathetic, so they understand your concerns about their pet's health.
- Prepare for potential outbreaks by assessing your capacity of care, vaccination

key to help stop the spread of infectious disease in areas where dogs congregate.

Infectious respiratory disease prevention should be aimed at vaccination strategies and increased sanitation methods. Pet professionals should also remain honest and transparent with media and customers in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. The best practice is to respond as quickly as possible and be proactive, rather than reactive, in communications.

Reviewing and applying these recommendations may help pet professionals in their businesses but,

more importantly, also can help keep pets safe and healthy.

To view the web conference, visit VetFolio.com/article/free-web-conference-pet-professionals-best-practices-consensus-statement-access-august-15-28-2016. ✖

For the best protection, all vaccination series should be finished at least two weeks before visiting boarding kennels, doggie daycares, training facilities, or other multidog events.



recommendations, and sanitation and isolation protocols.

- Educate your staff about the proper use of disinfectants and protocols for handling isolation and quarantine situations. Before disinfecting, all areas need to be cleaned thoroughly.
- When disinfecting, keep in mind all the areas in your facility that need to be cleaned, including all frequently handled items, such as pens, cellphones, doorknobs, light switches, keyboards, and computer mice. Remember that people can spread any kind of infectious outbreak.
- Build credibility with your customers by consistently sharing quality information through social media, email messaging, and even printed handouts.

- Always respond as quickly and proactively as possible in any crisis. Remember to employ the “5 Cs”—*compassion, control, concern, commitment, and communication*. Your voice should have the tone of compassion and concern, and your words should clearly communicate your commitment to resolving the situation and what you are doing to control it.
- When setting up your business, you should seek legal advice to understand your personal liabilities—for example, forming a corporation removes you from personal liability.
- Every business should have business owner insurance, and a veterinary business should have malpractice insurance as well.
- Avoid potential employee and

client conflicts by setting clear expectations, and have your staff and your clients acknowledge them. Always ask for and evaluate feedback to avoid later conflicts. If an issue arises, address the conflict proactively. You might want to involve confidential mediation to avoid the angst of litigation.

- In the event of negative feedback on social media, request offline communication to resolve problems, rather than seeking legal actions.
- To further develop your professional relationship with clients, host informational presentations about pet topics.