



State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Office of the State Veterinarian (OSV)

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NOTICE

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CANINE DISTEMPER OUTBREAK – ANCHORAGE AREA

Over 20 cases of canine distemper have occurred in Anchorage since August.
Cases may be linked to rescue dogs from rural communities.

What is Canine Distemper?

- A highly contagious viral disease that infects dogs.
- It spreads easily through contact with infected saliva, urine, feces, or respiratory secretions from coughing or sneezing.
- It is often fatal (50% mortality rate in adults and 80% in puppies).
- There is no cure.
- Distemper virus is not transmissible to humans.

What are the signs of distemper infection?

- Coughing and sneezing.
- Mucous discharge from the eyes and nose.
- Vomiting and Diarrhea (may be bloody).
- Depression, weakness, fever.
- Unusual behavior or neurologic signs such as circling, head tilt, muscle twitches, seizures.

What can I do?

Pet owners:

- Ensure that your dogs are up-to-date on distemper and rabies vaccines.
- If you get a new puppy or dog, limit their contact with animals outside of your household until they have received vaccines and boosters.
- Prevent contact between pets and wild animals.
- If your dog or puppy is showing any of the signs listed above, contact your veterinarian!

Veterinarians:

- Use appropriate biosecurity for animals presenting with respiratory or neurologic signs.
- Report suspect or confirmed distemper cases to the Office of the State Veterinarian.

Animal Rescues:

- Carefully screen animals prior to bringing them in from rural villages.
- Establish protocols for foster homes to protect other animals in the household.
- Quarantine animals from rural villages prior to adopting them out to new homes.

For more information on this outbreak, how to implement effective biosecurity and quarantine measures, or to report cases of distemper, please contact the Office of the State Veterinarian.