



Dear Maryland dog owners,

As many of you know, concerns about an outbreak of atypical canine infectious respiratory disease (CIRD) have been reported in areas all over the United States. This has dominated media outlets early in this holiday season. At this time, we are told several cases have been reported recently although we do know the actual number of cases reported.

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA) is aware of the concerns of the citizens of Maryland. CIRD is a broad term to describe known bacterial and viral causes of lung, trachea (throat), and nasal disease. The problem with atypical CIRD is that it does not always respond or behave like common CIRD. There has been very little and consistent data reported as the definitive pathogen causing this illness. Different states are reporting different things with some known pathogens being isolated and some are not.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the infectious agent is under investigation. What we do know is that cases have three (3) general syndromes:

- Chronic mild-moderate tracheobronchitis with a prolonged duration (6-8 weeks or longer) that is minimally or not responsive to antibiotics.
- Chronic pneumonia that is minimally or not responsive to antibiotics.
- Acute pneumonia rapidly becomes severe and often leads to poor outcomes in as little as 24-36 hours.

In addition, it can affect vaccinated and unvaccinated dogs, and sick dogs are often testing negative for known CIRD agents on PCR tests. There is no reported transfer of illness to humans (zoonosis) or other species, and the continued risk of zoonosis is believed to be extremely low.

As veterinarians and pet owners we understand how scary an outbreak can be. However, there are recommendations that dog owners can follow to reduce and prevent spread.

First, it cannot be stated enough that **prevention is the best medicine**, and owners should continue to keep and attend all appointments for preventative care. This includes keeping their dog's vaccines up to date. While the existing vaccines may not specifically target this unknown infection, maintaining overall health through routine vaccinations can help support a dog's immune system in combating various infections.

Second, optimal protection against common respiratory infections includes the annual vaccine for Bordetella, Adenovirus type 2, Distemper, and Parainfluenza vaccine, combined with the injectable influenza H3N2 vaccine. Take note that full immunity isn't present until two weeks after the last dose of vaccine.

Third, it is recommended to limit exposure to dogs outside of your household. This means avoiding high traffic areas like dog parks, dog shows, parades, and holiday light events. We understand that avoiding boarding, grooming and day care is not reasonable for everyone. If your dog must go to one of these facilities, we recommend they be up to date on all vaccines two (2) weeks prior to arriving. Additionally, we recommend vetting the facilities, and only utilizing facilities that require all vaccines not just Rabies.

Lastly, if you must travel with your dog to a dog show, it is recommended to have them examined by a veterinarian 24-48 hours before the show.

Monitor your pet for signs of respiratory illness. Cases have a **progressive cough with or without sneezing, and eye/nose discharge**. Please consult your veterinarian immediately if those clinical signs develop, particularly if your dog concurrently loses its appetite, has trouble breathing, is coughing continually, or is extremely lethargic.

At the first sign of illness, isolate your dog by keeping them indoors at home. This prevents the spread to other dogs.

Because atypical CIRD does not behave as expected, and all infectious causes appear similar on exam, it is important to expect diagnostics to be a part of your veterinary visit. Common diagnostics include, but are not limited to:

- Bloodwork
- Chest x-rays
- Special diagnostic tests like PCR and cultures

One common finding with atypical CIRD is that they require prolonged treatment, sometimes six (6) weeks or more. Through this treatment it is important to finish any medication prescribed and continue to communicate with your veterinarian. In severe or worsening cases, referral to specialty hospitals is often necessary as they have advanced therapies and can provide supervised 24-hour care.

As veterinarians we are here to work with you for the best care of your pets. As a part of monitoring and determining the cause of atypical CIRD, your veterinarian may report your dog's case to the Maryland Animal Health Program. MDVMA continues to work with the AVMA and regional state veterinary medical associations to keep our members updated on the information as it becomes available.

In the meantime, your veterinarian is your resource for knowledgeable, reliable, appropriate care. Please utilize their knowledge and recommendations.

Sincerely,

Ashley I. Nichols, DVM
President, Maryland Veterinary Medical Association

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA) is the leader in advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine in the Old Line State. Founded in 1886, the MDVMA combines a long-standing commitment to quality veterinary care with state-of-the-art processes to deliver the professional and personal development Maryland veterinarians need to be effective. MDVMA members include veterinarians and

technicians; small animal, equine and food animal practitioners; and private, government and academic practitioners.

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association is dedicated to ensuring the vitality of the veterinary profession by serving as the leader and resource through communication, education, advocacy, and support for the advancement of veterinary medicine.