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Department of Livestock Monitoring Canine Respiratory Disease

Helena, Mont. – The Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) is working with local veterinarians to monitor an outbreak of severe canine respiratory disease in Montana. DOL is aware of sick dogs in Bozeman, Livingston, Billings, Butte, Roundup, and Red Lodge. Several clinics are seeing multiple sick dogs per day.

“Veterinarians have reported dogs with coughing, difficulty breathing, and fever, similar to a severe case of kennel cough,” states Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, Assistant State Veterinarian. “Dogs with more critical infections have developed pneumonia which has been fatal in a small number of animals.

Previous vaccination for kennel cough does not appear to be protective, and young animals seem particularly sensitive. Several veterinarians in the Bozeman area are working with university and industry diagnostic labs to collect samples from pets that have been sick in hopes of identifying the cause of illness.

Canine influenza has been suspected as the potential cause of the outbreak due to the severity of illness, the lack of protection from prior vaccination, and preliminary tests suggestive of influenza exposure. However, a second sample collected 3 weeks later that shows an increased antibody response is needed to confirm the disease. The United States has seen three outbreaks of novel canine influenza virus. The first in Chicago in 2015 and more recently in California and the southeast US.

Until this outbreak has run its course, DOL recommends that pet owners consider limiting their dog’s contact with other pets in the community and work with their veterinarian. Most cases can be attributed to shared items such as public water bowls or exposure to other dogs at dog parks, events, facilitates with other dogs.

Canine influenza is not a reportable disease in the state of Montana. There is no evidence that canine influenza virus infects people.

The mission of the DOL is to control and eradicate animal diseases, prevent the transmission of animal diseases to humans, and to protect the livestock industry from theft and predatory animals. For more information on the department, visit www.liv.mt.gov.

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