

## Flu Vaccine for Dogs Gets Conditional License

**USDA grants license for Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health's canine flu vaccine.**

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has granted a conditional product license for Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health's Canine Influenza Vaccine, H3N8, for use by veterinarians in the United States. This is the first vaccine against canine influenza virus, according to the Kenilworth, N.J.-based company.

During the conditional license period, Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health will continue to submit data obtained in support of the product's performance, which will be evaluated by government regulators to determine whether a regular product license may be issued.

APHIS issues conditional licenses in the event of an emergency situation, limited market or other special circumstance. In this case, the special circumstance was the emergence of a new virus for which there were no existing licensed veterinary vaccines.

The vaccine, made from inactivated virus, has demonstrated to reduce the incidence and severity of lung lesions, as well as the duration of coughing and viral shedding. It is intended as an aid in the control of disease associated with canine influenza virus infection, a type A, subtype H3N8.

The vaccine is administered by subcutaneous injection in two doses, two to four weeks apart. It may be given to dogs six weeks of age or older and can be given annually as a component of existing respiratory disease vaccine protocols to ensure more comprehensive protection, according to the company.

Canine influenza was first identified in the United States in 2004. Since then, the virus has continued to spread and has now been detected in dogs in 30 states and the District of Columbia, according to Cynda Crawford, DVM, Ph.D., clinical assistant professor of shelter medicine at the University of Florida, and Edward Dubovi, Ph.D., professor of virology at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. Drs. Crawford and Dubovi have been tracking the disease since the virus was first identified.

"Canine influenza is a highly contagious respiratory infection that has a significant impact on dogs housed in shelters, kennels and communal facilities," Crawford said. "The availability of a vaccine can help prevent the medical, financial and emotional costs associated with this new virus."

Because the virus is a novel pathogen, most dogs have no immunity to canine influenza. Therefore, the infection can spread quickly through animal shelters, adoption groups, pet stores, boarding kennels, veterinary clinics and any location where dogs congregate.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that there is no evidence that people can get the virus from dogs.