



DISTEMPER FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS DISTEMPER?

Distemper is a virus that infects the respiratory tract, the gastrointestinal tract, the spinal cord and the brain. The virus is found in domestic dogs, coyotes, wolves, foxes, as well as raccoons, and some marine mammals. Black footed ferrets, mink, and skunks are especially susceptible to the disease.

HOW IS DISTEMPER TRANSMITTED?

The virus is transmitted by inhalation of aerosolized particles and direct contact. It is shed in the urine, feces, and secretions of infected animals. The virus is resistant to cold and the majority of cases in domestic dogs occur in the fall and winter.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF DISTEMPER?

- Discharge from the eyes and nose
- Walking as though they are on hot stones and/or falling over or circling
- Glowing green eyes
- Unkempt fur
- Seizures and foaming at the mouth
- Disoriented, lethargic and overall loss of aggression
- May approach people or curl up to sleep in an open area
- Functional gastrointestinal disorders - vomiting, diarrhea

HOW CAN I PREVENT MY DOG FROM GETTING DISTEMPER?

Most dogs are vaccinated as pups against distemper and regular booster shots may be given. If you are not sure, check with your veterinarian. To keep your pet safe, it is best to keep your dog on a leash when on walks and scan your backyard before letting your dog out.

CAN DISTEMPER BE TRANSFERRED TO HUMANS?

Distemper cannot infect humans but if in contact with the virus, you can transfer it to your dog from your clothing.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY PROPERTY AND FAMILY?

- Do not leave any food out, including bird feeders and pet food. The virus can be transmitted through shared food and water dishes
- Ensure all garbage, recycling and trash cans are secure and left out on the morning of your regular pick up.
- Keep your pet on a leash when on a walk and scan your yard before letting them outside.
- Check with your vet to ensure your dog has been vaccinated against distemper if you are not sure.

THE HEALTH DISTRICT AND THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LAB DO NOT TEST FOR DISTEMPER.

FOR WILDLIFE QUESTIONS OR TO EUTHANIZE WILDLIFE DISPLAYING DISTEMPER SYMPTOMS, CONTACT:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, Delaware County State Wildlife Officer | (614) 902-4221
Ohio Department of Natural Resources Wildlife District One Office | (614) 644-3925

 ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/wildlife/wildlife