



FAQs on Canine Related Illnesses

What has happened at Pima Animal Care?

PACC staff have identified cases of disease associated with Canine Distempervirus (distemper) and Streptococcus equi zooepidemicus (Strep zoo) in dogs housed at its shelter.

What is Canine Distempervirus (distemper)?

Canine distempervirus causes highly-contagious, potentially life-threatening disease in dogs, coyotes, and numerous other wildlife species. Puppies under the age of 5 months are most at risk, though dogs of any age can be infected if not vaccinated.

What does the virus do?

The virus attacks numerous organs, and signs of early infection may include fever/depression, "red and squinting" eyes and thick nose discharge, vomiting/diarrhea, and skin infection. Later, the disease may progress to pneumonia or neurologic signs such as twitching or seizures. The disease is easily prevented with routine vaccination, but treated with supportive care including antibiotics.

Is it contagious to cats or people?

No. This virus cannot infect housecats or people.

What is Streptococcus equi zooepidemicus (Strep zoo)?

Streptococcus equi zooepidemicus is a bacterium normally found in horses/cattle, pigs, and guinea pigs, where it doesn't cause disease. When this bacterium infects dogs, it may cause severe and potentially fatal pneumonia.

Why is Strep zoo so deadly?

There is no vaccine and few warning signs. This bacterium is known to cause abrupt outbreaks of fatal pneumonia in shelter dogs worldwide. Due to the confined environment and being a highly contagious disease signs of infection include fever/

depression, cough, discharge from the nose.

Are both of these illnesses worse in a shelter setting?

Yes. Shelter environments are stressful and often crowded settings, which pose the conditions at greatest risk for outbreaks.

Can Strep zoo be treated?

The Strep zoo infection is very responsive to many antibiotics, though identifying infection early enough to start treatment remains a larger challenge.

Can Strep zoo affect cats and people?

This bacterium may very rarely infect cats. Additionally there is a theoretical possibility that individuals with very poorly functioning immune systems could potentially be at risk for contracting this.

Can sick dogs at PACC make my personal dog sick?

If you don't visit PACC, your personal dogs are not likely to catch either of these bugs. However, many communities in Tucson and Pima County are very under-vaccinated. **Please vaccinate all your animals as recommended by your veterinarian immediately.** Do NOT take your under-vaccinated dogs to public areas as you risk exposure to distemper and parvovirus, among other pathogens. Please vaccinate all your animals as recommended by your veterinarian.

Are my pets at home at risk if I volunteer at PACC?

If you volunteer or work at PACC, all your resident pets should already be fully vaccinated. As usual, we ask that you leave shoes and the leashes used to walk PACC dogs outside your home. You also should change clothes and wash arms and hands prior to handling your own animals.