

ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT

Veterinary Public Health | (213) 288-7060 | vet@ph.lacounty.gov | <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>



Increase in community spread of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) in dogs in the Antelope Valley 8.27.2025

Key Points:

- The Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) is receiving increased reports of community-acquired cases of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) in dogs in the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County.
- Vaccination against CDV in puppies and adult dogs is the cornerstone of prevention of this disease.
- Recovered dogs may shed the virus for up to four months resulting in further spread in the community at congregate facilities such as dog parks, rescue agencies, daycare and boarding.
- [Report cases of distemper](#) in Los Angeles County

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

Between July and August 2025, there have been increased reports of community-acquired cases of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) in dogs in the Antelope Valley. CDV is endemic and found throughout Los Angeles County. Puppies and unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated dogs are at increased risk of becoming infected.

Local animal control agencies have implemented important disease control measures including monitoring incoming dogs for development of clinical signs, testing suspect cases, and enhancing cleaning and disinfection protocols. All dogs entering animal control care centers are vaccinated against distemper and other core diseases, and dogs that have been in care for longer than two weeks are receiving booster vaccines to strengthen their immunity and protect against infection. Local animal control agencies also offer low-cost community pet vaccination clinics year round.

CDV is a viral infection that infects dogs and other mammals such as ferrets and raccoons. Raccoons in Los Angeles County are a local reservoir for distemper and [previous outbreaks in wildlife have occurred](#). The virus does not cause disease in cats or humans. Feline panleukopenia, although sometimes known as feline distemper, is not related to canine distemper.

Puppies less than 20 weeks of age and unvaccinated dogs of all ages are at highest risk for infection with CDV. Dogs can become infected through direct contact with other sick animals or through

aerosol exposure such as droplets from coughing or sneezing. The virus can also be transmitted through contaminated surfaces such as shared water and food bowls or clothing, bedding, toys, and leashes. The incubation period of CDV is normally 1-2 weeks but can be prolonged with some dogs developing clinical signs 4-5 weeks later.

Clinical signs in dogs range from asymptomatic to severe, usually affecting the gastrointestinal, respiratory and neurologic systems. Occasionally, neurologic disease can occur weeks to months after exposure in dogs that were previously asymptomatic or that have recovered from gastrointestinal or respiratory disease. Dogs that are infected with CDV can shed the virus for as long as 4 months after recovery. For this reason, rapid recognition, testing, and strict isolation or quarantine of suspect and exposed dogs are critical to controlling spread.

Los Angeles County veterinarians are advised to:

1. **Vaccinate dogs for distemper:** Puppies should receive a series of 3 or more modified-live vaccines between the ages of 2 – 4 months. A vaccine booster should be given one year later, and then every three years for life.
2. **Educate clients and rescue groups:** As some clients and rescue groups vaccinate dogs for CDV at their own facilities, discuss the importance of proper vaccine handling, storage, and administration. Vaccines should be stored in a refrigerator according to the manufacturer's instructions and administered shortly after reconstitution. Improperly stored and handled vaccines are ineffective and do not provide protection against core diseases.
3. **Protect puppies:** Advise dog owners to keep puppies at home and away from unfamiliar dogs until they have completed the recommended vaccination series. Use caution when socializing dogs or in areas where dogs congregate such as dog parks, dog day care and boarding facilities.
4. **Keep dogs away from wildlife:** Advise dog owners to never allow dogs to have contact with wildlife including raccoons.
5. **Keep pet food and water indoors, away from wildlife:** Advise dog owners that pet food and water left outdoors attracts wildlife, which can spread distemper and other diseases (rabies, leptospirosis, raccoon roundworm).
6. **Report cases of distemper in Los Angeles County:** Use the [Distemper Report Form](#) and email to vet@ph.lacounty.gov.

Rescue agencies and pet congregate facilities (daycare, boarding) are advised to:

1. **Require vaccination for CDV and other core diseases prior to entry:** Dogs should be fully vaccinated for distemper, parvovirus, adenovirus, parainfluenza, leptospirosis, canine influenza and rabies prior to socializing with other dogs.
2. **Screen pets for illness prior to entry:** Dogs with vomiting, diarrhea, discharge from the eyes or nose, coughing, sneezing, lethargy, disorientation or any other signs of illness should be referred for veterinary care.

3. **Isolate sick pets:** Dogs with signs of illness should be kept away from other dogs and examined or tested by a veterinarian. Dogs that are confirmed positive for CDV should be kept strictly away from puppies and other unvaccinated or incompletely unvaccinated dogs for at least 4 months after recovery.
4. **Quarantine exposed pets:** Dogs that had contact with a distemper positive dog should be kept at home and monitored for signs of illness for 2-4 weeks.
5. **Perform regular cleaning and disinfection:** CDV is susceptible to commonly used disinfectants. Kennels and surfaces contaminated by sick dogs should be cleaned, disinfected and dried completely at least twice before re-use.
6. **Report cases of distemper in Los Angeles County:** Use the [Distemper Report Form](#) and email to vet@ph.lacounty.gov.

For questions or more information, contact Veterinary Public Health at vet@ph.lacounty.gov or call 213-288-7060 (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm).

Resources:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health – [Distemper in Dogs and Wildlife](#)
- UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program – [Canine Distemper \(CDV\)](#)
- Merck Manual - Veterinary Manual – [Canine Distemper](#)

Sincerely,

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