

Canine Distemper Virus for Fosters

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What is Canine Distemper Virus?

Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) is a viral infection that affects primarily dogs. It causes upper respiratory signs (cough, nasal discharge, eye discharge), gastrointestinal signs (decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea) and occasionally neurological signs (seizures, tremors, stumbling/difficulty walking). In severe cases, CDV infection can be fatal, although many dogs have only mild signs (or no signs at all).

Key points for foster families:

- Even though a dog appears clinically healthy, he can be shedding distemper virus for up to 4 months (occasionally longer) after infection – this means he is potentially contagious to other at-risk dogs for this period of time.
- Virus can live in the environment, on objects, or on *you* and can then be transmitted to other dogs for several hours.
- Cold or near freezing temperatures (for example, in the yard) will allow the virus to persist for much longer (weeks).
- Distemper affects primarily dogs, but it can also affect ferrets (usually fatal) and other wildlife. It does not affect humans or cats.

Fostering a dog with a recent **NEGATIVE** distemper test:

These are dogs that have been vaccinated against this disease and have not contracted this disease while in our care, though they have been recently exposed to the virus.

They have been tested for distemper with a test called a PCR that checks for distemper virus and several other respiratory pathogens. While these dogs have not shown any symptoms of canine distemper and were tested and shown to be negative for the disease at the time of leaving the facility, there is always a very small possibility that these dogs may become ill while in your care.

If the dog(s) show any signs of illness, such as coughing, ocular or nasal discharge, significant lethargy, decreased appetite, vomiting or diarrhea, you will need to seek immediate veterinary care.

Any dogs in the household must be fully vaccinated against Canine Distemper Virus. Please check with your veterinarian; DHPP or DAPP vaccines must be current and/or 2 weeks have passed since the final vaccination). **Do not allow your foster dog to mingle with puppies (less than 6 months of age), dogs that are not fully vaccinated, or dogs whose vaccine status you do not know for at least 4 weeks.** You should also avoid dog parks or areas with large numbers of dogs of unknown vaccine status for the next 4 weeks.

Additionally, anyone coming to your home should not have interactions with puppies or unvaccinated dogs.

Fostering a dog with a POSITIVE distemper test:

The dog(s) you are fostering has likely been infected with Canine Distemper Virus. Symptoms can range from asymptomatic to potentially fatal. Dogs eligible for foster have usually already been through the most serious part of their illness or were only mildly affected and now appear healthy.

Some dogs have low positive results; there is the possibility of a false low positive test (meaning a dog does not actually have the virus) with a recent vaccine – however, with known disease in other shelter dogs, we should treat any positive as potential infection, as viral numbers can be low very early or very late in infection, also.

If the dog(s) show any signs of illness, such as coughing, ocular or nasal discharge, significant lethargy, decreased appetite, vomiting or diarrhea, you will need to seek immediate veterinary care. Notify your veterinarian that you are bringing in a dog with known distemper infection before coming in for the appointment.

If you are fostering a dog that is or has been infected, it is safest not to have any additional dogs in your home.

Any other dogs in the household must be fully vaccinated against Canine Distemper virus (please check with your veterinarian; DHPP or DAPP vaccines must be current and/or 2 weeks have passed since the final vaccination). **DO NOT allow your foster dog to mingle with puppies (less than 6 months of age), dogs that are not fully vaccinated, or dogs whose vaccine status you do not know.** Do not take your foster dog to dog parks or any areas with other dogs until you have at least one negative PCR test result (preferably, two negative tests a week apart ensure the dog is no longer shedding).

Additionally, anyone coming to your home should not have interactions with puppies or unvaccinated dogs. If they do visit, advise them to change clothing and shoes and shower before returning home to any puppies or not fully vaccinated dogs.

There is information for your veterinarian provided below regarding retesting for dogs that have a previous positive result.

Additional Resources:

- UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program: www.sheltermedicine.com
 - Canine Distemper Virus (CDV):
<https://sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?utf8=%E2%9C%93&site=sheltermedicine&search%5Bslug%5D=canine-distemper-cdv>

Information for your veterinarian:

- If your foster dog is evaluated by an outside veterinarian, our recommendations are as follows:
- **New cases of respiratory signs (dogs that previous tested negative for distemper) that *start* showing respiratory signs or other signs consistent with distemper:**
 - These dogs should have a *Canine Respiratory Disease (CRD) RealPCR Panel (Standard)* (test code 3547) submitted to Idexx.
 - Instructions for sample collection can be found at: <https://vetmed-maddie.sites.medinfo.ufl.edu/files/2014/10/Collection-of-Swabs-for-Diagnosis-of-Respiratory-Pathogens-by-PCR.pdf>
- **For recovering distemper-positive dogs (known/confirmed CDV):**
 - A *Distemper Virus (CDV) Quantitative RealPCR* (test code 3265) only (NOT full respiratory panel) test should be submitted at one month from the initial result, then once every 2 weeks until a negative test is obtained. Another test, ideally, should then be completed a week later.
 - After 2 negative tests at least a week apart, the dog is considered no longer shedding the virus and no further restrictions are necessary.
 - Instructions for sample collection can be found at: <https://vetmed-maddie.sites.medinfo.ufl.edu/files/2014/10/Collection-of-Swabs-for-Diagnosis-of-Respiratory-Pathogens-by-PCR.pdf>