

Dear Musers,

As we are approaching race season we, the Head Veterinarians of your local midwest sled dog races, wanted to address some of the questions and concerns regarding Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC). You may have come across recent articles on the subject on social media or through local news outlets. Our aim is to provide you with some additional information and hopefully ease some concerns.

In recent weeks to months, there has been an increase in case reports of CIRDC in some areas of the country. It is common for the veterinary community to see a seasonal increase in respiratory illness during fall and winter. At this time there is no evidence to indicate that this increase in case numbers falls outside of the normal seasonal variation, that there is a new pathogen present, or that there is any reason for increased concern.

What is CIRDC?

Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC) is a series of clinical signs that can include cough, nasal discharge, ocular discharge, increased respiratory rate and effort, and fever. Clinical signs can range from mild to severe. There are many different pathogens - both viral and bacterial - that can result in these clinical signs and it is a highly contagious disease. Dogs that have exposure to other dogs (daycare, dog parks, boarding, shows, races, etc), are immunocompromised, brachycephalic or are elderly are at an increased risk of contracting respiratory illness. Treatment can vary but may include supportive care and time, oral antibiotics, antitussives and less commonly hospitalization and oxygen support.

What do we recommend?

Sled Dog Races do carry a slightly higher risk for participants contracting infectious disease compared to the risk your average house pet may experience given the travel and close proximity to other dogs that are factors inherent to race season. That being said, races are outdoors and participating canine athletes do not intermingle during race events. At this time we do not believe there to be an increased risk of contracting CIRDC this year compared to other years.

While risk is low, it is not zero. We highly recommend that participating canine athletes be up to date on Bordetella and Parainfluenza vaccines for race season. Avoid exposing your kennel to new dogs in the weeks leading up to your race season and monitor your kennels for signs of respiratory illness listed above. Avoid traveling with any dogs that may be experiencing these clinical signs. As always, continue to social distance dogs during race events.

For more information and ongoing reports from a reliable resource I will direct you to the blog Worms and Germs by Dr. Scott Weese, a veterinarian specializing in infectious disease.

<https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/>

As always, we are available to you for any further questions or concerns as we approach race season. We will continue to update you if changes or developments occur that would affect our population of dogs.

Best,

Your Head Veterinarians:

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