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It's not enough to cover your own mouth when you cough this cold and flu season, as veterinarians warn of a mystery respiratory illness affecting dogs in Illinois and nationwide.

The unknown infection causes respiratory symptoms and can lead to long-term, medicine-resistant pneumonia in affected dogs. It can also cause inflamed tracheas in dogs, also resistant to medication.

Affected dogs may be lethargic, with lots of coughing, sneezing and eye discharge. The mystery disease advances quickly, with dogs falling quite sick within a day or two.

All together, symptoms look a lot like kennel cough, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Veterinary Medicine [wrote on its blog Tuesday](#). Antibiotics and oxygen therapy have helped some, but not all of the sick dogs.

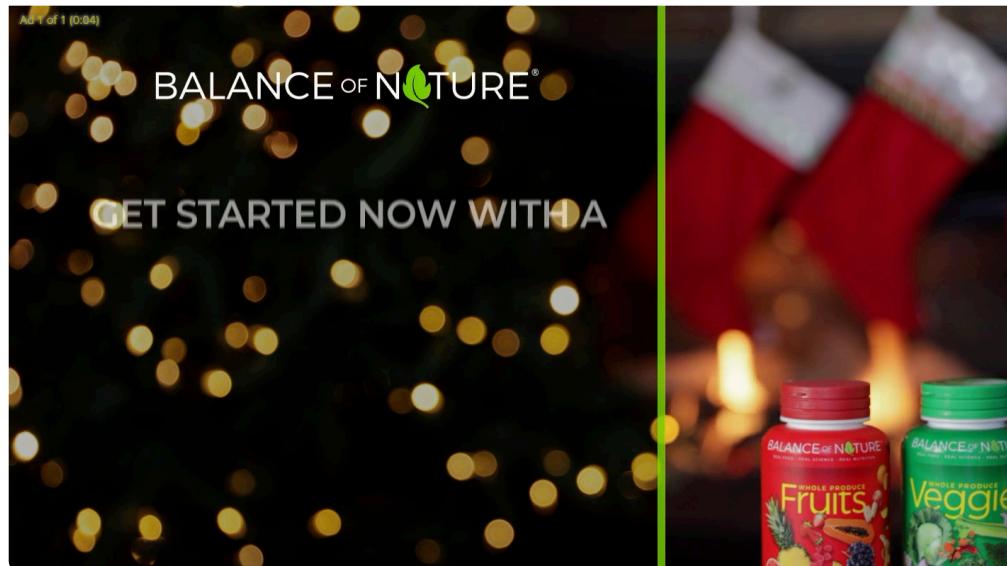
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Symptoms spread most easily in spaces where lots of dogs gather, like kennels or parks, the college said. Dogs can also catch the disease through indirect contact.

The disease is thought to have started in near Portland, Oregon. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has documented more than 200 cases in about three months.



Dogs in 10 states, including Illinois, have since fallen sick, [the "Today" show reported](#). Though the virus has crossed state lines, UIUC Veterinary Medicine wrote that it has not seen an uptick in cases.

The disease seems to be a virus, but doesn't quite match common respiratory issues, the American Veterinary Medical Association reported last week.

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Research into the disease is underway at the University of New Hampshire's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, where researchers are looking at samples from Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Senior veterinary pathologist David Needle told The Associated Press that dogs are not necessarily dying in large numbers due to the illness.

Still, public health officials in affected states are encouraging dog owners to minimize contact between their furry friends and other local pets.

Getting dogs up to date on vaccinations for respiratory illnesses, including dog flu, can also help. Both common strains of dog flu have traveled through Illinois in the past.

The Associated Press contributed.

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