

Iowa Cat Tests Positive for H1N1

The cat is the first feline to be diagnosed with the influenza strain.

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Iowa state officials confirmed Nov. 4 that a cat has tested positive for the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. This is the first time a cat has been diagnosed with this strain of influenza. Up until this point, H1N1 had only been found in humans, pigs, birds and ferrets.

The 13-year-old indoor cat in Iowa was brought to the Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center at Iowa State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, where it tested positive for the H1N1 virus.

"Two of the three members of the family that owns the pet had suffered from influenza-like illness before the cat become ill," said Ann Garvey, DVM, public health veterinarian at the Iowa Department of Public Health. "This is not completely unexpected, as other strains of influenza have been found in cats in the past."

Both the cat and its owners have recovered from their illnesses.

The diagnosis was in collaboration of the Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Center for Advanced Host Defenses, Immunobiotics and Translational Comparative Medicine, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Animal Industry Bureau.

The American Veterinary Medical Association urges pet owners to monitor their pets' health closely, no matter what type of animal, and visit a veterinarian if there are any signs of illness.

The H1N1 symptoms in people are very similar to human respiratory flu, and may also cause gastrointestinal side effects such as diarrhea and vomiting, according to the AVMA. In severe cases, pneumonia can occur. To date, animals infected with H1N1 have shown mild respiratory illness or no illness at all.

The AVMA is tracking all instances of H1N1 in animals and posting updates on its website.

Read about keeping your cat healthy during flu season.