

Canine Kennel Cough

Kennel cough is the common name for a highly contagious upper respiratory disease of dogs. It is caused by a virus called Parainfluenza, a bacteria called Bordetella Bronchiseptica or a combination of the two. Kennel Cough is species specific, meaning that it only infects dogs and NOT cats or humans.



How is it transmitted?

Kennel cough is transferred between dogs by fluid discharge from the mouth or nose of an infected dog, similar to that of the common cold in humans. Dogs can shed the virus through the air by sneezing, coughing or breathing; or by direct physical contact with toys, food bowls, even hands and clothes of the owners.

Despite the name of the disease it is not just seen in dogs that have been in kennels or rescue centres. We are examining some dogs with symptoms of kennel cough purely having mixed with other dogs on walk, this is due to the airborne nature of the disease.

What are the signs?

The most common symptom of kennel cough is a dry cough sometimes as if the dog is trying to clear the throat and in some cases as a gagging cough. Owners may be concerned that their dog is choking or has something stuck in its throat. The cough is often brought on by excitement, exercise or pressure on the dog's trachea, such as that produced by a lead. Affected dogs may only exhibit a runny nose or green nasal discharge but are usually otherwise alert and active, with a healthy appetite and no fever.

In rare cases where the disease progresses to pneumonia dogs will cough mucus, have nasal discharge, fever, difficulties breathing, lose their appetite and become depressed.

How is kennel cough treated?

Kennel cough is a self-limiting disease, meaning that in most dogs it resolves in 5-10 days without treatment. We do prescribe non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to decrease the inflammation and coughing. Only in more severe cases where the disease progresses in immunocompromised or elderly patients we opt for antibiotics and rarely need to be hospitalised.

Affected dogs should be kept quiet (decrease excitement), ideally at home and monitored closely.

How is kennel cough prevented?

We recommend having your dog vaccinated against kennel cough. It is not a total prevention as some dogs may still become ill (like our flu vaccination) but prevention is better than cure... especially in this disease.

MKTG/Pets/Collateral/InformationSheets/Dog/Canine Kennel Cough



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