



KENNEL COUGH

Kennel cough is an infectious respiratory disease in dogs that produces quite a distinct hacking cough. It can also sound a bit like a “goose honk”. In some cases, dogs can exhibit only mild symptoms for a short duration, however it can progress to pneumonia which can be life threatening.

There are several organisms that can cause kennel cough, and quite commonly there is a combination causing the disease. The most common agents are the *Bordetella bronchiseptica* bacteria, the parainfluenza virus and the adenovirus type 2. The infection is spread usually by direct contact with other infected dog's saliva or oro-nasal secretions. Often the problem is that an infected dog is usually contagious before showing any clinical signs.

All dogs are susceptible to infections; however, it is more commonly seen in puppies that are 6 weeks to 6 months of age. Usually there is also a history of exposure to either kennels, boarding or doggy day-cares where there is a high-density population of dogs.

Symptoms

Mild form: Usually dogs with mild kennel cough have a soft, moist cough that persists for 10-20 days. Sometimes they can also be lethargic, have reduced appetite and a fever. Some

dogs will develop the traditional dry hacking cough seen with the Bordetella bronchiseptica/parainfluenza virus complex. They can also develop discharge from the eyes and nose, sometimes yellow if there is secondary bacterial infections. Often times after coughing they may bring up a white foamy mucus, which can be worse after exercise.

Severe form: Dogs that develop severe forms of kennel cough usually have a high temperature and show clinical signs of pneumonia, such as increased breathing rates and effort.

Diagnosis

Kennel cough is usually diagnosed based on a history of exposure to other dogs, checking vaccination status and looking at the clinical symptoms. In more severe cases your vet may consider doing bloodwork and X-rays to rule out secondary infections and other problems. Please note, if you think your dog has the symptoms of kennel cough and you are going to take them to the vets, make sure you inform the receptionist before your arrival and wait with your dog in the car. This helps reduce transmission to other dogs in the clinic.

Management and treatment

Most cases are treated as out-patients; it is important to isolate your dog from others for at least two weeks as it is highly contagious.

Medications

Broad spectrum antibiotics are usually indicated in uncomplicated cases. In more severe cases often combination therapy is required. Cough suppressants can often be used to help your dog feel more comfortable.

Supplements

It's always helpful to give your dog

some extra help during periods of sickness. High doses of vitamin C and a good multivitamin can help boost the immune system. It's also important to ensure good gut health and bacteria after antibiotic use with a good probiotic supplement.

Nutrition

It's really important to feed your dog nourishing and healthy foods during any time of sickness, and if there is a reduced appetite then talk to your vet about special hospital foods that are high in calories and nutrients.

Exercise

It is recommended that your dog is rested while infected with kennel cough. This will allow the body the time it needs to fight off the infection.

Prevention and control

There are vaccinations available for kennel cough and most puppies will have this vaccine as part of their primary course. The vaccines, however, are considered “non-core” by the World Small Animal Veterinary Association. This means that the need for vaccination should be determined on the basis of geographical and lifestyle exposure risks of the individual dog. It is worth having a chat to your regular vet to see if the kennel cough vaccine is right for you. However, if your dog goes into kennels or doggy daycare then it's likely to be compulsory. There are two types of vaccines currently available, one that goes under the skin, and an intra-nasal vaccine that goes into the nostrils. If your puppy has the one under the skin, they will need two vaccinations and then yearly boosters. If your puppy has the intranasal vaccine they will only require one puppy vaccination, followed by yearly boosters.



Dr. Rebecca Penman
Director / Veterinarian
Tel. 021 145 5283
www.vetpost.co.nz
PO Box 9450, Tauranga
Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

