

Kennel Cough

Infectious tracheobronchitis or kennel cough is the most common respiratory infection in dogs. results from inflammation of the upper airways. Generally, it is a mild disease, but it can progress to fatal bronchopneumonia in puppies or to a chronic bronchitis in debilitated or older dogs. Kennel cough is highly contagious in dogs and is prevalent in dogs housed in close confinement (kennels, animal shelters).

Canine Distemper, Parainfluenza, Canine Adenovirus-2, or other viruses can be the primary pathogens involved in causing the disease. The Bordetella bacteria may act as a primary pathogen, however, it and other bacteria may cause secondary infections after viral injury to the respiratory tract. Stress, improper nutrition, and extremes of ventilation, temperature, and humidity can increase susceptibility to and severity of the disease. There is usually a history of recent contact with other dogs. The cough is exacerbated by exercise or excitement.

Signs of kennel cough include harsh, dry cough, which can be followed by gagging or retching. The cough is easily induced by gentle palpation of larynx and trachea. Development of more severe signs, including fever, mucoid nasal discharge, lethargy, and anorexia indicates possible pneumonia.

X-rays are done to determine if there is secondary pneumonia.

If signs are severe, antibiotics are given, and continued 3-5 days after all symptoms are gone. Hospitalization may be necessary for pneumonia. While showing signs of kennel cough, infected dogs need to be isolated from other dogs to prevent the spread of the disease. Infected dogs should be kept quiet, and humidifying the air can help.

Dogs should be immunized against Distemper, Parainfluenza, Canine Adenovirus-2, and Bordetella (if at risk). Intranasal Bordetella has been found to provide a faster acting immunity than the injectable vaccine. We recommend the Bordetella vaccine every 6 months if your dog gets groomed, boarded, goes to dog parks, or day care, or is in contact with a lot of dogs.