

Care Guides

Kennel Cough

Kennel cough is a common name for infectious tracheitis and bronchitis where the trachea, or windpipe, and the surrounding areas of the airway into the lungs become infected and inflamed causing a cough.

Whilst commonly a stay in kennels can be a trigger, it is also possible to acquire kennel cough without being in kennels. All it takes is for your dog to sniff at some phlegm which another dog has coughed up in the park or street, or to be in a room with an infected dog coughing. This is why we ask coughing dogs to wait in the car park not the waiting room.

Kennel cough has an incubation period of 2-14 days and so some dogs can carry the infection without showing signs. It can spread by sharing air space, food/water bowls, toys and blankets.

Much like the human common cold, there can be many different strains and causes, both viral and bacterial. This leads to a variety of signs ranging from:

- **a long lasting hacking cough**
- **clearing the throat**
- **gulping phlegm after coughing**
- **occasionally reluctant to eat and lethargy**
- **or just a mild cough in an otherwise well dog.**

Most dogs get better from kennel cough within about 3 weeks without treatment; however anti-inflammatories and cough-suppressors are sometimes used to help make a dog feel better in themselves. Rarely antibiotics might be used depending on the severity, other illnesses your dog might have or if they are very young or very old. In most cases it is a nuisance illness rather than a dangerous illness requiring treatment.

Whilst recovering from kennel cough you could avoid airway irritation by using a harness instead of a collar to attach their lead and ensure your home is well ventilated. Resting your dog at home and avoiding popular dog walking areas is sensible to stop the spread until they have stopped coughing, this could be up to 4-6 weeks! Moistening dry food, offering a broth or honey water can sooth the throat and reduce soreness associated with the cough.

Vaccination against Bordatella bronchiseptica, the worst bacteria in kennel cough, and Canine parainfluenza, the worst virus in kennel cough, will lessen the effect of kennel cough but will not necessarily stop your dog from catching kennel cough. Many boarding kennels require the vaccine to be given, and immunity is achieved in 3 days for Bordatella and 3 weeks for parainfluenza, which lasts for 1 year before revaccination is required.

Dogs that have caught kennel cough may have immunity for up to a year but will be not be immune to catching kennel cough again in the future as there are many different strains.

If you are worried about kennel cough, please call the clinic to get advice from our team of vets and nurses.