

Kennel Cough (Infectious Tracheobronchitis)

What is kennel cough?

Kennel cough is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by a combination of virus and bacteria.

How is it spread?

The infection is primarily airborne, spread through coughing and sneezing. It is especially common where dogs are grouped together such as boarding kennels, shelters, pet stores, groomers, obedience classes, and dog shows. Clinical signs usually develop 3-10 days after exposure.

What are the clinical signs?

- dry sounding, hacking cough - often followed by gagging or retching motions that look similar to vomiting. This may be the only clinical sign.
- nasal or eye discharge
- In severe cases, the cough is accompanied by decreased appetite, decreased activity level, and often times a fever. ***Kennel cough, especially in the severe form, may be difficult to tell from early canine distemper virus.***

How is kennel cough treated?

We typically treat kennel cough with antibiotics for two weeks. Mild cases may improve without any treatment. Additional therapies such as nebulization (breathing treatments), bronchodilators, and cough suppressants may be used in some cases.

Is there a vaccine?

Yes, and we recommend vaccinating all dogs at risk. Although not 100% effective, the vaccine will decrease the likelihood of your pet getting kennel cough and if your pet *does* get kennel cough, the vaccine will decrease the severity of the disease.

What else can be done to prevent it?

- avoid overcrowded, confined areas
- isolate coughing dogs
- use disinfectants like bleach and have proper ventilation when housing dogs together