

KENNEL COUGH (*Tracheobronchitis*)

Canine infectious tracheobronchitis (kennel cough) is one of the most prevalent infectious diseases in dogs. Fortunately, the majority of cases are not serious, resolving on their own in 1 to 2 weeks. But because some dogs develop life-threatening complications, you should take precautions to prevent your pooch from becoming infected with this highly contagious disease.

Kennel cough can be caused by a number of different airborne bacteria (such as *Bordetella bronchiseptica*) and viruses (such as canine parainfluenza) or a mycoplasma (an organism somewhere between a virus and a bacteria). Typically, more than one of these pathogens (disease-causing agents) must bombard the dog at once to trigger illness. Such a multifaceted attack is most likely to occur when a dog spends time in close quarters with many other dogs. Dogs that attend dog shows, travel frequently, or stay at kennels have a higher risk of developing kennel cough than do dogs that stay at home most of the time.

The primary sign of kennel cough is a dry-sounding, spasmodic cough caused by pathogens that induce inflammation of the trachea (windpipe) and bronchi (air passages into the lungs). At the end of a coughing spell, a dog will often retch and cough up a white foamy discharge. Some dogs also develop conjunctivitis (inflammation of the membrane lining the eyelids), rhinitis (inflammation of the nasal mucous membrane), and a nasal discharge. Affected dogs usually remain active and alert and continue to eat well. But if you suspect your dog has kennel cough, isolate it from other dogs and call your veterinarian.

Your veterinarian can typically diagnose kennel cough from a physical exam and history. The cough is very characteristic and can be easily elicited by massaging the dog's larynx or trachea. But if the dog is depressed; feverish; expelling a thick yellow or green discharge from its nose; or making abnormal lung sounds, your veterinarian may want to perform diagnostic tests such as a complete blood count (CBC) chest x-ray, and laboratory analysis of the microorganisms inhabiting your dog's airways. These tests can help determine whether the dog has developed pneumonia or another infectious illness such as canine distemper.

Immunization can be an important part of a kennel-cough prevention program and is recommended. If your dog is diagnosed with kennel cough, your veterinarian will likely prescribe an antibiotic to help prevent any secondary bacterial infection and a cough suppressant. Before any treatment regimen administered, it is imperative that a proper veterinary examination and appropriate diagnostics be performed.

