

KENNEL COUGH

What is kennel cough?

Kennel Cough is more technically known as Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis. This term localizes the most common clinical sign, coughing, to the trachea (wind pipe) and bronchi (within the lungs). It may be caused by several viruses and bacteria. These include the adenovirus type-2 virus, the parainfluenza virus, and the bacterium *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. The infection spreads rapidly from dog to dog in close quarters, such as a boarding kennel. This is the origin of its name.

What are the signs, besides coughing?

They are quite variable. Other symptoms include discharge from the eyes and nose, swollen tonsils, wheezing, lack of appetite, and lethargy. Although coughing is usually mild, it may persist for several weeks.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for the viruses involved. No drug will kill them, so they must run their course, which may take 2-3 weeks. Antibiotics are useful against the bacteria involved, although some resistance to some antibiotics has occurred. Cough suppressants are used to break the self-perpetuating cycle of coughing that occurs.

How can I prevent this disease?

Most vaccination programs include a vaccine against the parainfluenza virus and *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. These should be administered to puppies and boosted in adults.

How effective are these vaccines?

Immunity after natural infection with respiratory viruses, like parainfluenza or bacteria like *Bordetella*, is neither solid or long-lasting. We cannot expect vaccines to be much better. Therefore, a booster just before placing your dog in a boarding kennel is good insurance against disease.

How are the *Bordetella* vaccines delivered?

Bordetella vaccination is performed either by injection or via the “intranasal” route. The latter means that the vaccine is dropped into the nostrils. This permits immunity to develop in the membranes of the nose and throat where the viruses and bacteria enter. This is like setting up a road block to stop infection as a means of protecting your dog.