



Kennel Cough

What is Kennel Cough?

Kennel cough is an infectious bronchitis of dogs, characterized by a harsh hacking cough that most people describe as sounding like “something stuck in my dog’s throat.” This bronchitis may be of brief duration and mild enough to warrant no treatment at all or it may progress to a life-threatening pneumonia depending on which infectious agents are involved and the immunological strength of the patient. An uncomplicated kennel cough runs a course of a week to two weeks and entails frequent fits of coughing in a patient who otherwise feels active and normal. Uncomplicated cases do not involve fever or listlessness, just lots of coughing.

How Infection Occurs

An infected dog sheds infectious bacteria and/or viruses in respiratory secretions. These secretions become aerosolized and float in the air where they can be inhaled by a healthy dog. Crowded housing and sub-optimal ventilation play important roles in the likelihood of transmission but organisms may also be transmitted on toys, food bowls, or other objects.

THE INCUBATION PERIOD IS 2 TO 14 DAYS

Dogs are typically sick for 1-2 weeks. Infected dogs shed the *Bordetella* organism for 2-3 months following infection.

How is Diagnosis Made?

Usually the history of exposure to a crowd of dogs within the proper time frame, plus typical examination findings (a coughing dog that otherwise feels well) is adequate to make the diagnosis. Radiographs show bronchitis and are particularly helpful in determining if there is a complicating pneumonia.

How is Kennel Cough Treated?

Although most cases will go away on their own, we like to think we can hasten recovery with antibiotics to directly kill the *Bordetella* organism. Kennel cough may be treated with cough suppressants to provide comfort during natural recovery. Alternatively, antibiotics and cough suppressants can be combined.

Information gathered from Veterinary Information, Inc.

<http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=600>