

Kennel Cough

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Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis (ITB), more commonly known as kennel cough, is a highly contagious respiratory infection in dogs. Common amongst pets housed together in kennels, pet shops or shelters, kennel cough in dogs sounds like a dry hacking cough in an otherwise healthy pet.

What makes kennel cough contagious is that it spreads so quickly, and while it is a mild, self-limiting disease that usually gets better on its own without treatment, puppies between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 months are the most at risk, and severely affected.

What Causes Kennel Cough?

Kennel cough is rarely caused by a single agent, and is usually made up of a combination of bacterial and viral organisms that can determine how long kennel cough will last for a dog. If the pup's disease is caused by just one agent, coughing is limited and a dog will recover quicker than if several agents are the cause, which can mean a recovery time of 2 to 3 weeks, and as long as 6.

The most prevalent two causes of kennel cough are Bordetella bronchiectasis bacteria and **canine Parainfluenza** virus. It's important to maintain your dog's vaccination schedule and veterinarian visits to minimize the chances of contacting any of the following kennel cough causing viruses and bacteria:

How to Identify Kennel Cough Symptoms

If you suspect your dog may have kennel cough, contact your veterinarian for a professional diagnoses and treatment. If your pup seems out of sorts and you're concerned about possible infection, some of these signs may help to identify kennel cough symptoms:

1. Consistent, **dry hacking cough** that sounds like a "goose honk;"
2. Retching, and sometime **retching up a white, frothy-looking fluid**;
3. **Fever** can develop in more serious cases;
4. **Loss of appetite** is reported in sicker dogs;
5. **Lethargy** is a sign of complicated kennel cough;
6. **Respiratory distress or pneumonia** in very affected dogs;
7. Visible or **nasal discharge**.

What are the Types of Kennel Cough Treatment?

There are two clinical syndromes associated with kennel cough, an uncomplicated and complicated one. Although kennel cough treatment of an uncomplicated diagnosis is usually not necessary, antibiotics are frequently prescribed to reduce the chances of development of a secondary bacterial infection; the medicine may actually shorten the length of time the dog coughs. Kennel cough treatment can include:

- **Antibiotics**, a precaution to avoid a secondary infection; the most commonly used are [Clavamox](#), [Trimethoprim sulfonamide](#), and [Doxycycline](#).
- **Steroids**, used short-term (3-4 days) and in low doses may lessen the severity of the inflammation of the trachea and the coughing.
- **Cough suppressant syrup**, only if advised and prescribed by a veterinarian, and in very limited doses. Cough syrup should not be used at all in cases of pneumonia.
- **Harnesses over collars** will help avoid putting pressure on the trachea, especially if your pup is excited and pressure is exerted on his neck from pulling.
- **Nebulizers** with sterile saline may be helpful, and can also be used in cases where therapy is not working, and antibiotics or steroids can easily be added to the solution.
- **Fluids, antibiotics and other supportive treatment** to alleviate symptoms may be required in complicated cases.

How to Treat Kennel Cough Transmission

Kennel cough is most commonly seen in the summer and fall, and has an incubation period between 3-10 days.

Dogs and puppies as young as 2 weeks old are susceptible to catching kennel cough if they are housed together in kennels, which is when transmission of Parainfluenza and Bordetella through dog-to-dog contact or contact with aerosolized droplets (airborne transmission) can occur.

It may take up to 3 months to clear the bacteria from the respiratory tract in dogs, however, there are a few ways to help minimize kennel cough transmission:



- **Disinfect your dog's crate and accessories with bleach**, diluted 1:32 parts with water, chlorhexidine or benzalkonium.
- Always have adequate **ventilation running through rooms**.
- **Quarantine infected dogs for 10 -14 days** if possible, but if unable, make certain to isolate coughing dogs immediately.
- Always **wash hands** after touching dogs.
- **Wash all bedding** with hot water, soap and bleach.