

Canine Cough

Is your dog suffering from a dry, hacking cough? Is the cough triggered by activity or exercise? Has your dog been in boarding kennels or in close contact with other dogs recently? If your answer is YES to any of these questions, your dog may be suffering from canine cough.

What is it?

Canine cough (also known as kennel cough) is a highly contagious disease that causes sudden onset of harsh dry coughing. In most cases, the disease is self-limiting, with resolution of symptoms in approximately 2 weeks. However, it can also result in serious respiratory complications, such as secondary bacterial pneumonia, in old, weak or young dogs.

One or more infectious pathogens are usually involved in canine cough, including bacteria (*Bordetella bronchiseptica*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*) and viruses (canine parainfluenza virus, canine adenovirus, canine distemper virus). It is similar to the common cold in humans – some people show no signs, some people get a mild cold while others end up with the flu – all from the same infectious agents.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually involve harsh, dry coughing, which can be exacerbated by exercise, excitement or the pressure of a collar. Dogs may also show signs of nasal discharge, retching and gagging. Body temperature is usually normal. These symptoms can last for several weeks.

How does my dog get it?

Canine cough is highly contagious and is easily transmitted by coming into contact with an infected dog, whether it is through direct nose-to-nose contact or indirect contact such as collars, leashes, water bowls, etc. Anywhere that dogs congregate such as dog shows, boarding kennels or off-leash areas is a potential source of exposure to canine cough. If your dog gets canine cough, any other dogs at home are likely to get infected too.

What can I do?

Dogs usually recover on their own without any medication. Rest for at least 7 days and avoiding exercise and excitement will reduce irritation of the airways caused by excessive coughing. Cough suppressants containing codeine derivatives may be prescribed to control persistent non-productive cough. Antibiotics may be needed in some cases.

Canine cough can best be prevented by vaccination. Canine cough vaccinations for *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and canine parainfluenza virus help reduce the severity and duration of symptoms but unfortunately do not always prevent your dog from getting the disease. The initial vaccination is given in 2 separate doses four weeks apart from 6-8 weeks of age. After this a booster vaccination is required annually. We highly recommend that dog owners vaccinate their dogs against canine cough before boarding their animals. Many boarding kennels will require proof that your dog has been vaccinated against canine cough.



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The other way to prevent canine cough is by minimising your dog's exposure to the infectious organisms – but this is very difficult if your dog has a social life! Dogs need to spend time with other dogs to be properly socialised.

If you are worried that your dog has canine cough or if you want to get them vaccinated, please contact us for an appointment.