

Let's talk about - ***CANINE COUGH***

One of the public relations problems for boarding kennels today is caused by a much misunderstood dog disease called "canine cough" tracheobronchitis or often improperly referred to as "kennel cough" and that "canine cough" can be contracted anywhere not just in kennels. As a dog owner you should be aware of some of the facts about this disease.

What is canine cough?

Infectious tracheobronchitis is a highly contagious upper respiratory disease, which is spread by an airborne virus. The incubation period of the disease is roughly 3 to 7 days. The main symptom is a gagging cough, sometimes accompanied by sneezing and nasal discharge, which can last anywhere from several days to several weeks. Although this coughing is very annoying, it usually does not develop into anything more serious. However, just as with the common cold, it can lower the dog's resistance to other diseases making him or her susceptible to secondary infections so they must be observed closely to avoid complications.

Dogs can be carriers of the disease without showing any signs, making it difficult to notice any potential carrier. When more than one organism is involved (Bordetella bronchiseptica, Parainfluenza virus, Adenovirus) It becomes a more serious case.

How is it cured?

Just as in the case of the common cold, tracheobronchitis is not "cured" but must run its course. Many times antibiotics will be prescribed to prevent secondary infection and sometimes cough suppressants will be prescribed to reduce excessive coughing, but these medications do not attack the disease itself.

Does tracheobronchitis, occur only in kennels?

No. Since these viruses can be present anywhere and can travel for considerable distances through the air, they can affect any dog, even one, which never leaves its own backyard. But tracheobronchitis is more likely to occur when the concentration of dogs is greater such as at dog shows, kennels, grooming offices, veterinarian offices and hospitals as well as pet shops. Dogs can also be exposed while running loose or while being walked near other dogs.

But aren't the chances of catching it greater when a dog is in a kennel?

Yes, because in a kennel, a dog encounters two conditions, which do not exist at home proximity to a number of potentially contagious dogs and the stress and excitement of a less familiar environment, which can result in lowered resistance to disease. (These same factors explain why children are more likely to catch the flu in school rather than at home.) But the more frequently a dog boards at a kennel, the better are the chances that he or she will acquire immunity to the disease. Even during a widespread outbreak, only a fairly small percentage of exposed dogs are affected.

Are these viruses a constant problem?

No. tracheobronchitis, like the flu, is often seasonal. It also tends to be epidemic. When veterinarians begin to see cases, they normally come from every kennel in town, as well as from individual dog owners whose dogs were not kenneled at all. When the outbreak is over, they might not see another case for months.

Can my dog be vaccinated to protect him or her against Tracheobronchitis?

The vaccination to protect your dog is called "Bordatella". The vaccine is recommended as early as 10 weeks of age. The vaccine can be administered separately or in conjunction with the Distemper & Rabies vaccines. An annual booster is recommended for all dogs. It must be noted however, that this vaccine does not protect against all strains of the disease.

Can the kennel prevent my dog from catching tracheobronchitis?

Unfortunately no amount of supervision, sanitation and personalized care can prevent a dog from catching an airborne virus. All that a good boarding kennel can do is to recommend immunization against it, refuse to board any obviously sick dog, listen & watch for any signs of sickness and make sure that any dog requiring veterinary attention receives it as quickly as possible. (Strangely, the dog with parainfluenza alone may not appear ill, yet is contagious.)

Camp KCS, Inc.

