

Kennel Cough... a very contagious infection

Kennel Cough (ITB - Infectious Tracheo-Bronchitis) is the most common respiratory disease of dogs. Like the common cold in humans, the organisms that cause kennel cough are airborne. Your dog can catch this debilitating, persistent disease simply by being close to other infected dogs. It can also be spread by human handling, through cages, and food and water bowls. That's why it is so common wherever dogs are housed or confined together.

Recognizing the symptoms...

The medical term for kennel cough is Infectious Canine Tracheo-bronchitis. It is an upper respiratory disease primarily caused by a bacterium, *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Parainfluenza virus and mycoplasmas (pathogens – a specific and unique species of bacteria) have also been implicated as causative agents.

In infected dogs, the bacteria and viruses multiply and destroy the delicate ciliary lining of the dog's trachea, thus irritating its upper respiratory tract and producing the characteristic high-pitched "honking" cough. The gagging cough and retching motions commonly associated with this disease are often mistaken for vomiting or choking. While kennel cough is typically described as a dry hacking cough, there can also be sneezing, accompanied by increased nasal discharge. These symptoms usually last from a few days to several weeks. Some dogs also may have a fever, depression, and loss of appetite.

Two common symptoms of kennel cough are persistent coughing, which can keep your dog (and you) awake all night, and a weakened ability to fight other respiratory infections.

Once your pet has been exposed to kennel cough, it will usually take 5-7 days before symptoms can be observed. The severity and duration of infection will ultimately be determined by the number and types of infectious agents involved, the patient's physical and immune status, and, to a lesser extent, the supportive therapy provided. Treatment consists of antibiotics and cough suppressants

Kennel cough is bothersome for all dogs at any age. But for puppies or immunocompromised animals, it can have serious results, including stunted pulmonary development. This is particularly harmful in working breeds, however, can undermine the health of any dog. In severe cases, a secondary bacterial invasion of the lower respiratory tract may develop into pneumonia.

Possible sources of infection include:

Boarding kennels, dog shows, veterinary hospitals, breeding kennels, dog races, grooming salons, training facilities, humane societies/shelters, pet shops, field trials.

This information has been compiled by the Southeastern Newfoundland Club, as part of their comprehensive rescue program. We are grateful for their generosity in sharing all of their hard work.- NCA 2006