

Kennel Cough In Dogs

Kennel cough is the common name for infectious tracheobronchitis in dogs. It is generally initiated by either a viral infection or injury to the lining of the respiratory tract. After this initial damage bacteria, fungi, parasites and other organisms cause further damage and continuation of the clinical signs.

It is a disease that is highly contagious and is more common in dogs that are in large packs or dogs that mix with other dogs (such as at obedience classes, kennels or even in the park). It is spread by aerosol (eg sneezing or coughing from a dog) or direct contact with an infected dog. Three to five days after exposure dogs generally develop a dry hacking cough. This may progress to a moist cough, and the dog may have mucus appearing from its nose or mouth. Most dogs are lethargic (don't want to move), have reduced exercise tolerance and may have trouble breathing. With severe cases the dog will lose its appetite. Depending on the severity of the disease rest may be the best treatment for your dog. However due to the risk of secondary infections many dogs require antibiotic treatment as well as drugs that help with the expulsion of the mucus. With more serious cases intravenous fluids, x-rays of the lungs and nebulization (to break down the mucus) may be required.

Even with treatment it may take 1-2 months for a dog to recover from this disease. With severe secondary infections some dogs may even die from it. It is therefore important to contact your veterinarian if your dog starts to cough.

Fortunately there are a number of vaccinations that provide some protection against the more common initiating causes of kennel cough. These are traditionally included with your typical 'C3' vaccination and become either a 'C4' or a 'C5' vaccination. The C4 vaccination includes those diseases covered by your C3 vaccination plus Canine parainfluenza virus. The C5 covers those in the C4 plus *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. As far as vaccination in Australia is concerned the C5 vaccination is the gold standard. Although vaccination may not give 100% protection against kennel cough it reduces the risk of contracting kennel cough as well as the severity of the disease if your dog does contract it. On a local level we have recently seen a number of different cases of kennel cough in Glen Innes. If your dogs is at risk of getting kennel cough or you simply want to provide the best level of protection for it please discuss a C5 vaccination with your veterinarian.