**Kennel Cough (Infectious Tracheobronchitis)**

### What is Kennel Cough?

Kennel Cough is an infectious bronchitis characterized by a harsh, hacking cough which most people describe as sounding like “something stuck in my dog’s throat.” It is analogous to a chest cold for humans and is only a serious condition in special circumstances: in general, it resolves on its own. A dog with Kennel Cough generally feels active and maintains a normal appetite despite frequent fits of coughing. There is usually no fever or listlessness, just lots of coughing.

Because it is common for Bordetella to be accompanied by at least one other infectious agent, such as the Parainfluenza virus, “Kennel Cough” is actually a complex of infections, rather than infection by one agent. Any of these other viruses can produce a minor sore throat and cough ultimately allowing an “in” for the more toxic Bordetella bronchiseptica bacteria.

In general, dogs get infected when they are kept in a crowded situation with reduced air circulation but lots of warm air (i.e. a boarding kennel, vaccination clinic, obedience class, animal shelter, animal hospital waiting room or grooming parlor). In reality, most cases of coughing that begin acutely in the dog are due to infectious causes and usually represent some form of Kennel Cough. The incubation period is 2-14 days.

**Bordetella** infection can be picked up by rabbits, guinea pigs, pigs, cats (if they are very young and housed in groups), and other dogs. Bordetella is generally not considered contagious to humans though it is closely related to Bordetella pertussis, the agent of Whooping Cough. Immune-suppressed humans potentially could be infected.

Among dogs Kennel Cough is fairly contagious depending on stress level, vaccination status, and exposure to minor viruses, it is very rarely fatal. Dogs shed Bordetella organisms for up to 3 months after infection. Vaccinated, healthy dogs in a home might develop mild, if any, signs of kennel cough after exposure to a new dog; however in some cases serious illness may be transmitted. Talk to your veterinarian if you have concerns.

### How is Kennel Cough Treated?

Kennel Cough is usually manageable in a home. The BEST thing to do for a dog with kennel cough is provide them with a warm, stress-free home. In this environment most dogs will recover within a few weeks.

Although most cases will go away on their own, antibiotics can help hasten recovery by directly killing the Bordetella organism. Alternatively, Kennel Cough may be treated with cough suppressants to provide comfort during natural recovery. Alternatively, antibiotics and cough suppressants can be combined. The medications can be obtained through your regular veterinarian. Severe, untreated cases of kennel cough can develop into pneumonia, so it is important to discuss kennel cough with your veterinarian.

### When Should You Seek Treatment?

We recommend that all newly adopted dogs be seen by veterinarian within a few days of adoption for a routine health check. If your dog(s) develop a hacking cough, discharge from eyes and nose, lethargy or loss of appetite, you should make an appointment with a veterinarian as soon as possible.

In the event your pet shows signs of illness, please review your copy of the Adoption Agreement and Health Guarantee regarding your financial responsibilities as an adopter. Remember that included in your adoption kit is a coupon for a free general physical offered by the local veterinarians. Contact your vet for the specifics regarding the use of this coupon.

**Sources**

Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis, Sheltering Medicine

marvistavet.com/kennel_cough