

Kennel Cough

Unfortunately, due to the large number of stray dogs brought to the rescue centres, some of them are likely to be suffering from kennel cough.

Kennel cough (bordetella) is highly infectious and is spread easily wherever there are many dogs in one place, such as in kennels.

Here are some things for you to consider:

- **What are the symptoms?**

Sneezing in the early stages.

Cough - dry and irritating or moist and productive. (Sometimes sounds as if they have something in their throat).

Sometimes vomiting after eating (mucus or phlegm).

Nasal discharge (watery at first, which may become mucoid).

Loss of appetite in severe cases.

Severe cases in pups or older dogs can lead to bronchitis or pneumonia, if the condition is not treated.

- **How is it spread?**

Kennel cough is spread from minute droplets in the air, which are inhaled, or from direct contact.

Dogs can not only spread the infection during the incubation period, which is normally around 10 days, but also for anything up to 12 weeks after coughing has ceased, long after any signs of illness. For this reason it is very difficult to isolate against the disease as, quite often a dog entering kennels does not show obvious signs of infection.

- **Can I take it home to my dog?**

Washing your hands - preferably using an antiseptic soap - is normally enough to kill the bacterium, which you may otherwise take home and pass onto your own dog.

It may be wise to change any soiled or contaminated clothing before petting any other dogs.

- **How can I avoid exacerbating the condition?**

Avoid any undue stress or excitement as this can precipitate severe coughing spasms.

Dogs which pull on their collars may be better in a shoulder harness.

Keep exercise periods short and restricted to the lead.

Dogs with a productive cough may benefit from a moist atmosphere which may help loosen and expel mucus from the dog's airways.

- **How serious is kennel cough and could my dog die from it?**

Kennel cough could be compared to human flu in that while it is very unpleasant, dogs do not usually die from it.

However, puppies, older dogs in generally poor health are at risk from secondary conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia. Therefore, it is always wise to protect them from the risk of kennel cough.

Recovery from illness is usually complete within two to three weeks.

- **Should my dog see the vet if it catches Kennel Cough?**

Yes, it is always advisable to seek veterinary advice as medication may need to be prescribed to relieve symptoms and prevent secondary infections.

- **Is there a vaccination against Kennel Cough?**

A vaccine is available against both bordetella and parainfluenzavirus. Unfortunately, immunity against respiratory infections is difficult to maintain for long periods. This means the vaccination cannot guarantee immunity from kennel cough. If your dog is vaccinated against kennel cough, they will be less likely to catch kennel cough and if they do they are more likely to show only mild symptoms. The kennel cough vaccination is given via the nose.

It is worth noting that this is a **live vaccine** meaning your dog may shed the disease for a time after vaccination. Considering this we do not recommend having your dog vaccinated against kennel cough if they are in contact with anybody with a compromised immune system. Because of the risk of shedding disease after vaccination against kennel cough most kennels will have a period of time after the vaccine where they will not house your dog. Always check your kennel's individual policy before having your dog vaccinated against kennel cough.

All vaccinations should be maintained with annual boosters (see leaflet on why it is important to vaccinate).