

Canine Kennel Cough – It Can Be Prevented

Kennel cough is an infectious respiratory disease that primarily affects dogs but can also affect cats, pigs, horses, and rabbits. It is caused by a bacteria called *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. It is very contagious and is commonly seen in pets that have recently been in boarding kennels, shelters, grooming facilities or veterinary clinics or any other situation where they have been around other pets. It is usually spread by moisture droplets in the air from affected animals when they are breathing, coughing, or sneezing but it can also be spread by brushes, food and water dishes and other items that may have come into contact with an infected animal. Kennel cough usually causes a dry hacking cough 1-7 days after exposure to an infected animal. It may also cause gagging, sneezing, a fever, depression and loss of appetite. The clinical signs can last anywhere from days to several weeks and usually resolve without complications. Occasionally other viruses or bacteria can attack the respiratory tract and cause more serious disease including severe pneumonia. Very old, very young or immune-compromised animals can also have more serious disease as a result of this bacteria.

Generally pets can recover without treatment, but antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and cough suppressants may be used depending upon the severity of signs and the veterinarian's findings when he/she examines the patient.

Fortunately vaccines are available that are quite effective at preventing the disease. Generally an intranasal vaccine is used. Ideally the vaccine should be given several weeks before the dog will be going to an area of potential exposure but immunity starts building within 2 days of getting the vaccine. This vaccine requires an annual booster in order to provide continued protection.