

Kennel Cough – What is it and why is it so named?

Canine Cough is another synonym for Canine Infectious Tracheo-bronchitis, (CITB) a respiratory disease complex that has a variety of causes including viruses, bacteria, mycoplasma and environmental factors such as stress, dust and humidity.

Kennel Cough is so called because it is commonly seen in areas where dogs are housed, kennelled or congregate. Any communal area where dogs come into close contact provides a ready means of passing the infectious agent from one dog to another. Greyhound race meetings and the training track are an obvious contact area, particularly when in the heat of competition the respiratory systems are working overtime and can easily infect or be infected by another dog. This condition is extremely contagious.

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onset of a dry hacking cough and loss of bark. The first thing noticed is the cough, which has variable amounts of sputum, and nasal discharge. Looking in the mouth often reveals a lot of froth in the back of the throat.

The clinical signs are the result of one or a combination of viruses and bacteria infecting the epithelium of the nostril, larynx plus trachea, and then may progress to the bronchi and lung tissue. Generally the clinical signs settle spontaneously over the following two weeks.

Dogs are typically only mildly affected; they don't generally lose their appetite and apart from the cough are not particularly sick. Exercise exacerbates the coughing, and in some cases this mild form can lead to a more severe infection of the bronchi, bronchioles and lung tissue. This can lead to bronchopneumonia, which can be fatal.

Obviously the stress of a race or strenuous exercise can make the condition much worse and dogs should have exercise restricted while they are affected. An infected dog can spread the agents by coughing directly in the area of another dog which inhales it, or by spreading the agent onto objects (cage, water/food bowls) etc, which are then sniffed by other dogs. There has been a marked increase in the number of cases seen in greyhounds recently.

More often younger dogs are affected and some of these cases have been very severe, and in several cases, fatal.

The best way to limit the spread is vaccination. There are two types of vaccination; one being injectable (parenteral) and the other intranasal. These work on different parts of the immune system. Unfortunately respiratory vaccines are not always completely effective, and while they may not always completely protect, they will generally decrease the severity of the disease.

All dogs going to communal areas should be vaccinated **at least yearly**, and most kennels will not accept dogs for boarding that have not been vaccinated. Be sure to get your dogs vaccinated at least two weeks before going into kennel situations.

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