



Association of Pet Boarding and Grooming (Qld) Inc

3994 Mt Lindesay Hwy, Park Ridge South, QLD, 4125

info@apbg.com.au

www.apbg.com.au

ABN 66 895 661 861

Canine Cough

One of the public relations problems for boarding kennels today is caused by a much misunderstood dog disease called “canine cough”, tracheobronchitis, or “para-influenza”. As a dog owner you should be aware of some of the facts about this disease.

What is canine cough?

Infectious tracheobronchitis is a highly contagious upper-respiratory disease which is spread by an airborne virus. The incubation period of the disease is roughly 3-7 days. The main symptom is a gagging cough, sometimes accompanied by sneezing and nasal discharge, which can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks. Although this coughing is very annoying, it does not usually develop into anything more serious. However, just as with the common cold, it can lower the dog’s resistance to other diseases making him/her susceptible to secondary infections. He/she must therefore be observed closely to avoid complications.

How is it cured?

Just as in the case of the common cold, tracheobronchitis is not “cured”, but must run its course. Many times antibiotics will be prescribed to prevent secondary infection and sometimes cough suppressants will be prescribed to reduce excessive coughing, but these medications do not attack the disease itself.

Does tracheobronchitis only occur in kennels?

No. Since these viruses can be present anywhere and can travel considerable distances through the air, they can affect any dog, even one which never leaves its own back yard. However, tracheobronchitis is more likely to occur where the concentration of dogs is greater such as at dog shows, kennels, veterinary offices and hospitals, as well as pet shops. Dogs can also be exposed while running loose or while being walked near other dogs.

Are the viruses a constant problem?

No. Tracheobronchitis, like the flu, is often seasonal. It also tends to be epidemic. When veterinarians begin to see cases, they normally come from every kennel in the area, as well as from individual dog owners whose dogs are not kenneled at all. When the outbreak is over, they might not see another case for months.

Are the chances of catching it greater when a dog is in a kennel?

Yes...because, in a kennel, a dog encounters two conditions that do not exist at home- proximity to a number of potentially contagious dogs, and the stress and excitement of a less familiar environment which can result in lowered resistance to disease (the same factors that explain why children are more likely to catch the flu in school rather than at home). But the more frequently a dog boards at a kennel, the greater are the chances that he/she will acquire immunity to the disease. Even during a widespread outbreak, only a fairly small percentage of dogs are affected.

Can my dog be vaccinated to protect him against tracheobronchitis?

Yes! Vaccines against parainfluenza and adenovirus type 2 (in combination with other vaccines) are routinely used as part of an adult dog's yearly check up. Puppies are usually vaccinated for these in combination with distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus in a series of immunisations. It is important to note that the vaccines that are used to prevent this viral disease are made from one strain of more than 100 different strains of the virus and therefore are not as effective against some strains as others are. Intra-nasal vaccines are also available for Bordetella Bronchloseptica (another cause of canine cough). Although some veterinary practices do not use this intra-nasal vaccination routinely, it should be considered for pets that board or for those whose veterinarian recommends it. Your veterinarian is in the best position to recommend a program of preventative health care management depending on your pet's needs.

Can't the kennel prevent my dog from catching tracheobronchitis?

Unfortunately, no amount of supervision, sanitation, or personalised care can prevent a dog from "catching" an airborne virus. All that a good boarding kennel can do is to recommend immunisation against tracheobronchitis, refuse to board any obviously sick dog, listen and watch for any signs of sickness (strangely, the dog with parainfluenza alone may not appear ill, yet is contagious), and make sure that any dog requiring veterinary attention receives it as quickly as possible. The pet owner is financially responsible for such care.



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