



CANINE INFECTIOUS TRACHEOBRONCHITIS (Kennel Cough)

What is Kennel Cough?

What we call infectious tracheobronchitis or “kennel cough” is any contagious respiratory disease of dogs that is manifested by coughing and seemingly not caused by canine distemper (CD). In most dogs, the development of the disease involves an initiating injury of the respiratory tract and/or a viral infection followed by invasion of the damaged tissue by bacterial, fungal, mycoplasmal, parasitic, or other virulent organisms, resulting in further damage and clinical signs.

How Common is It?

It is very common and occurs mostly where dogs of varying ages and susceptibility congregate, often under less than ideal hygienic conditions as in some pet shops, humane society shelters, research facilities, and boarding and training kennels. It is found worldwide and any dog breed may be affected.

What Are Its Symptoms?

The clinical signs are related to the degree of respiratory tract damage and the age of the affected dog. It may range from an uncomplicated cough to severe, life-threatening pneumonia. It is worst in puppies that are 6 weeks to 6 months old. After exposure, clinical signs may be mild or nonexistent in the affected dog or as severe as seen in dogs with pneumonia.

The most characteristic sign of uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis is a cough in an otherwise healthy animal. The cough usually begins approximately 4 days after exposure to the infecting agent(s). It is usually dry and hacking or a burst of coughs, followed by gagging or expectoration of mucus. Excitement, exercise, changes in temperature or humidity of the inspired air, or gentle pressure on the trachea will induce a spasm of coughing.

Severe infectious tracheobronchitis is an entirely different disease. A constant, low-grade or fluctuating fever (103- 104° F) may be present and the effect on the appetite tends to be pronounced. When present, the cough is moist and produces mucus or other discharges. Other clinical signs may include nasal discharge, lethargy, loss of appetite, difficult breathing, and exercise intolerance.

How is It Diagnosed?

The diagnosis usually is established provisionally by eliminating the noninfectious causes of coughing. The differential diagnosis for infectious tracheobronchitis for determining a specific infectious agent is difficult. A case

history that reveals a source of exposure is important. The dog's vaccination status is also important. Blood tests and chest radiographs (x-rays) may be indicated. In most dogs with uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis, thoracic radiographs are unremarkable and are of value primarily for ruling out noninfectious causes of a cough or for confirming the presence of pneumonia.

How is it Treated?

Outpatient therapy commonly used for dogs with uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis. All treatment can be given at home by you after the initial examination is completed. In-hospital therapy is strongly recommended for dogs with complicated infectious tracheobronchitis and/or pneumonia.

Home Care...

- Enforce rest for at least 14-21 days for uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis.
- Enforce rest for at least the duration of radiographic evidence if pneumonia is detected.
- Diet: Provide a good quality canned or dry dog food
- Isolation of dogs affected with infectious tracheobronchitis from other animals is to be encouraged. Infected dogs may transmit the agent(s) before onset of clinical signs and afterward until immunity is fully developed.
- Affected dogs with uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis should respond to treatment in 10-14 days.
- Once infections spread in a kennel, they can be controlled by evacuation for 1 or 2 weeks and disinfection with commonly used chemicals such as sodium hypochlorite (Clorox) (1:30 dilution), chlorhexidine, or benzalkonium.
- Antibiotics and other medicines are used to eliminate bacteria and other infections and to quiet the cough.

Call Us If...

- You have trouble giving your dog its medicine.
- Your dog continues to cough in spite of its medicine.
- Its general health seems to diminish.
- It loses its appetite.
- It is still coughing after 10-14 days.

Thank You for This Opportunity to Serve You!