Canine Cough

Did your pup get an intranasal, “squirt up the nose” vaccination with us recently? Or did they come in coughing, as if they were trying to clear their throat? Perhaps you were going to send them into boarding and the establishment required they be up to date with their Kennel Cough vaccine.

Canine cough (previously known as Kennel Cough) is an infectious disease that primarily affects the upper respiratory tract. It can be caused by a number of bacteria or viruses all at once, including:

- *Bordetella bronchiseptica*
- Canine Parainfluenza virus
- Canine Adenovirus type 2
- Canine herpesvirus
- *Mycoplasma canis*
- Canine influenza virus
- Canine respiratory coronavirus

Infection is often mild and self-limiting and most dogs do not need treatment. However, some infections may lead to complications such as life-threatening pneumonia. This greatly depends on what organisms are involved, the age of the dog, their vaccination status and overall health.

What are the signs?

Dogs of any age or breed can contract Canine Cough. They have a distinct harsh, “goose honking” cough or may sound like they are choking on something. They may also present with sneezing, gunky eyes, nasal discharge or sensitive throats. Vaccinated dogs frequently present with these signs but are otherwise bright and well. In more severe cases, dogs may be lethargic, inappetent and have difficulty breathing. They can succumb to secondary bacterial infections which may lead to complications like pneumonia. Usually, dogs will show these signs anywhere between 2-14 days after infection.

How do they get it?

These organisms can be transmitted by contact with aerosolised respiratory droplets, direct dog-to-dog contact or contaminated shared objects such as water bowls or toys. Multi-dog environments such as boarding kennels, the groomers or even the local dog park increase the chances of infection due to the high number of individuals passing through and sometimes stressful situations they encounter there.

How is it diagnosed?

If you suspect your dog has Canine Cough, please bring them in for a check-up. Most commonly, the distinctive clinical signs coupled with a recent history of attending a multi-dog environment is enough to presumptively diagnose the infection. In more serious cases, chest x-rays can show bronchitis or pneumonia which will greatly change the treatment plan. Sometimes, a nasal or throat swab can be sent off to the lab to identify the specific organisms involved in the infection.

What is the treatment?

Uncomplicated cases of Canine Cough usually resolve on their own after 1-2 weeks. In this time, your vet may prescribe cough suppressants to your dog to improve their daily comfort. They may also suggest nebulising your dog with saline and oxygen or placing them into a bathroom with the hot shower running to breathe in warm, moist air. Both of these options help to move along excessive secretions and mucus. If there is evidence of infection, they may be prescribed a course of antibiotics, otherwise these are contraindicated as most of the organisms involved in Canine Cough are viruses.

How do we prevent it?

Vaccination is key in reducing chances of infection. Most veterinary clinics will offer the "C5 vaccine" which includes three of the most common components of Canine Cough – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, Canine parainfluenza virus and Canine adenovirus type 2. This does not guarantee they will not contract the infection (as there

are so many organisms involved), however it greatly reduces the clinical signs they may show. Here at Vet HQ, we vaccinate with the Bronchishield III intranasal vaccine which is the most effective form and needs to be boosted every year. As with all infectious diseases, environmental hygiene is very important. Communal objects and surfaces should be cleaned regularly with bleach or a veterinary-specific formulation. Multi-dog establishments should ensure adequate ventilation and try to reduce crowding and stress.

If you suspect your pup has Canine Cough, please do not hesitate to contact us for a consultation. Even if the clinical signs don't quite fit, we will help you investigate the situation and get them feeling much better!

Dr Karmen