

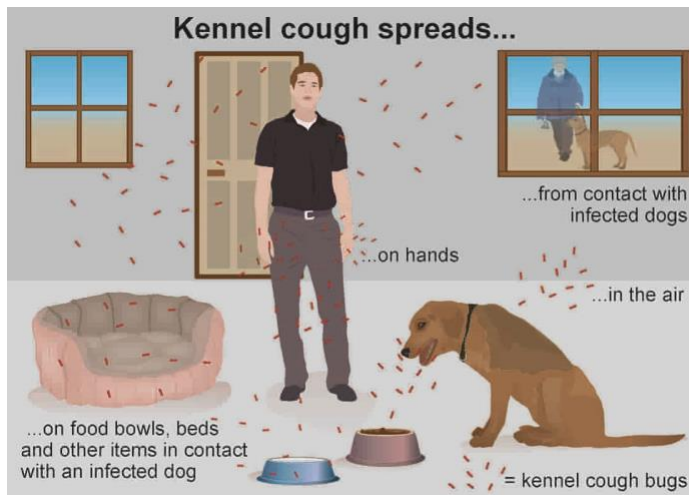
Infectious Tracheobronchitis (Kennel Cough)

What is Kennel Cough (KC)?

True kennel cough is an infectious cough in dogs, caused by a combination of a viral infection (**Parainfluenza**) and a bacterial infection (**Bordatella bronchiseptica**). There are also many other upper respiratory tract infectious agents that can cause similar clinical signs.

Catching KC

Kennel cough is prevalent where large numbers of dogs congregate e.g. kennels and shelters. However, as the infectious agents are highly contagious and can be transmitted through the air (aerosol transmission) or on objects containing airborne droplets or nasal secretions (such as hands and bowls), there is sometimes minimal contact. The incubation period is ~3-7 days.



KC Vaccinations

The KC vaccination is given annually and is a vaccination against **Parainfluenza** and **Bordatella bronchiseptica**. However, due to their being multiple strains of virus, contrary to popular belief, this vaccination does not prevent infection completely, but it does reduce the incidence and severity of infection. There are not any vaccinations for the multiple less common upper respiratory tract infectious agents which can also cause these clinical signs.

KC Clinical Signs

The classic cough associated with KC is a harsh dry hacking-type cough that occurs in paroxysmal spasms and may be associated with a terminal retch. It sounds very dramatic and is associated with a sore throat. It can also sound as if something is stuck in their throat and is sometimes accompanied by sneezing and nasal discharge. The cough tends to worsen with excitement, exercise, or pulling on the lead. Demeanour can range from being relatively unaffected through to inappetence and lethargy.

KC Management / Treatment

Although this coughing is very annoying, it does not usually develop into anything more serious. Most cases of uncomplicated infectious tracheobronchitis are self-limiting, managed simply with rest, and do not require antibiotic therapy. However, just as with the common cold, it can lower the dog's resistance to other disease thus increasing susceptibility to secondary infections, and so the dog must be observed closely to avoid complications. Some more serious cases will need antibiotics. Medications commonly include cough suppressants, to help reduce the frequency and severity of the coughing episodes, and painkillers, to help reduce the discomfort associated with this disease.

Animals can shed virus for approximately a week after they are clinically recovered, so please keep them at home during this time (isolated from other dogs). Please also make sure you practice good hand-hygiene after handling your pet, before touching anyone else's. 10% bleach solution can be used to disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated.

The cough usually persists for 1-2 weeks but can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks. During this time, please remove your pet's collar (any pressure on the neck can trigger a coughing episode), keep them at home and rested and give medications as directed. They may need softer food than usual that is easier to swallow through a sore throat. If they develop a soft moist cough, nasal discharge, it looks

like they are having trouble breathing, are breathing faster than usual, become lethargic, have a decreased appetite, or you are otherwise concerned, please revisit as secondary complications such as pneumonia can occasionally develop.

KC Summary

Kennel cough is a fact of life and can be compared to human respiratory infections, which are prevalent when people become stressed, e.g. in winter, when traveling (particularly on aircraft) and at any time there is physical or emotional upheaval. These factors exacerbate the situation when dogs are in close proximity in boarding kennels.

Like a flu, KC is often seasonal. It also tends to be epidemic. When we begin to see cases, they normally come from every kennel in the area, as well as from individual dog owners whose dogs are not kennelled at all. When the outbreak is over, we might not see another case for months.

If you have any concerns at any time, please call us on (08) 9384 2644.

An Extra Note About Kennels and KC

Does KC only occur in kennels?

No. Since these viruses can be present anywhere, and can travel for considerable distances through the air, they can affect any dog (even one which never leaves its own backyard). But KC is more likely to occur when the concentration of dogs is greater such as; dog shows, kennels, veterinary clinics, hospitals, and pet shops. Dogs can also be exposed while running loose or while being walked near other dogs.

Are the chances of catching KC greater in kennels?

Yes... because, in a kennel, a dog encounters two conditions which 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 (these same factors 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 the chances are that it will acquire immunity to the disease. Even during a widespread outbreak, only a fairly small percentage of exposed dogs are affected.

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

Unfortunately, no. 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 strongly recommend immunisation against tracheobronchitis, refuse to board any obviously sick dog, listen and watch for any signs of sickness, and make sure that any dog requiring veterinary attention receives it as quickly as possible. (Strangely, a dog with parainfluenza alone may not appear ill, yet it is contagious). Professional boarding kennels would justifiably expect owners to accept the financial responsibility for such care.

