

Kennel Cough Information

Kennel Cough (Bordetella as it is also called) is a fairly common ailment in dogs. It is the canine equivalent of the common cold or flu in humans. People tend to associate it with dogs who either are being or have been recently boarded or "kenned." But your dog doesn't need to be boarded to catch Kennel Cough.

Kennel Cough is an airborne virus, which is highly contagious. Just as children often contract colds or the flu from school, camps or play dates, dogs can also contract Kennel Cough by being exposed in daycare, caged boarding facilities, the local dog park or even the friendly neighbor dog through the fence—where ever other dogs can be found.

Any time your dog is in the vicinity of an infected dog, the potential exists for infection. The **incubation period is about 8-10 days**, meaning your dog will not display symptoms of illness for about 8-10 days following exposure to the virus. Having a strong immune system is the best way to avoid coming down with the symptoms if/when your dog is exposed to the virus. This is why not ever dog in the kennel (or house) will get it if there is an outbreak. **The best way to strengthen a dog's immunity is through promotion of good, complete nutrition and a low-stress, peaceful lifestyle.** Get your dog comfortable being away from home and you. Make them comfortable coming to Sleepy Creek Pet Lodge for short periods of time before having them stay for longer periods; this will decrease stress while staying with us. Some doctors recommend giving a daily dose of Vitamin C (250mg per 20lb of dog) and Vitamin E (200 units per 20lb of dog) to all dogs to keep their immune systems strong. If you give your dog Vitamin C every day, you can boost the amount prior to daycare or boarding for extra protection.

We do all we can here at SCPL to keep your dog from getting Kennel Cough. We require that all dogs be vaccinated against Kennel Cough; this vaccine is also known as "Bordetella." We do not allow guests known to have Kennel Cough symptoms to stay with us during their illness.

However, just as in the case with human colds, we cannot get rid of Kennel Cough all together. The vaccine is only approximately 60% effective. It is similar to the "flu shot" for people; each year a vaccine is developed based on which strain(s) are suspected to be most prevalent, but there are many other strains of virus out there that can cause a dog to develop Kennel Cough. Be aware that your dog can still catch Kennel Cough even if they have had a shot to prevent it. **Dogs may also carry the illness and spread it to others without displaying symptoms itself.** Therefore, we want you to be aware that, despite all we do here at SCPL, Kennel Cough is a common illness that may be contracted here or anywhere else other dogs can be found.

The usual symptoms of Kennel Cough include a **dry, "non-productive" cough** and may develop a fever. The dog sounds as if there is something stuck or caught in the throat and the coughing is an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the object. Sometimes the coughing/gagging seems very violent. The episodes of coughing may go on for minutes at a time and then be repeated in intervals. **Always check your dog and make certain that they are not actually choking or have something stuck in their throat first!!** One way you can "test" for Kennel Cough is to press the throat gently, right in the collar area. If the dog has Kennel Cough, this will most likely trigger some coughing.

If your dog displays symptoms of Kennel Cough while attending SCPL, we will need to isolate your dog to keep the other dogs safe and healthy, and will ask you to pick the dog up as soon as possible. We apologize in advance for the inconvenience, but we are dedicated to making SCPL the safest place possible for your furry friends!!

If your dog does develop Kennel Cough symptoms, don't panic. The way this illness operates is analogous to the common cold that we humans sometimes catch; simply put: it has to run its course. There is no magic pill or cure, but there are many ways to treat and ease the symptoms. The goal is to support the body (immune system) while it is healing itself. Kennel Cough generally will be gone in 2 weeks time or less, with or without antibiotics.

NOTE, however that secondary bacterial infections and or pneumonia can develop from an initial case of Kennel Cough. Also, some more serious conditions, such as Distemper can look like Kennel Cough in the beginning.

So please check with your vet especially if your dog is very old, very young, or has a weak immune system in general.

Here are some ideas for natural treatments you may use to treat your dog's Kennel Cough symptoms. None of these will harm your dog in any way, even if they do not even have Kennel Cough, but you may want to check with your own vet before giving them to your dog.

For boosting the immune system and fighting infection:

Vitamins: 500mg Vitamin C 3x/day (250 mg for tiny dogs) If you already supplement with Vitamin C great! This is in addition to the regular daily dose, and is spaced out during the day.)

Herbal tinctures:

Echinacea (give a few drops, 3x/day, either directly into the mouth or on food.)

Goldenseal (same instructions as Echinacea)

Other: Colloidal Silver (give just a drop or two, 3x/day. May be mixed with food or put into drinking water.)

For directly combating the Kennel Cough virus:

Homeopathic Remedies:

Bryonia -- (give 1-2 pellets/tablets 3x/day, allow no food for ten minutes before and after the dose. Most health food stores sell homeopathic remedies in the 6X or 6C potency, which is fine to use. If you have a choice of potencies, ask for 30C, which is a bit stronger. Homeopathy works when the correct remedy is matched to the correct symptoms, regardless of the potency of the remedy.)

Drosera—(same instructions)

For soothing throat irritation:

Honey (about a teaspoon for a small-medium dog, a tablespoon for a larger dog 3x/day)

Eliminate exposure to second hand smoke.

Maintain humidity in the environment.