



KENNEL COUGH

Kennel cough or acute tracheobronchitis is a concurrent bacterial and viral infection causing upper and lower respiratory inflammation in dogs. It is a common condition which is spread in the mucus secretions of infected dogs and signs take 2-10 days to appear. A common misconception is that Kennel cough can only be contracted in kennels, this is not the case, these account for less than half the reported cases.

Clinical Signs:

- High pitched honking cough finished off with a gag
- Bringing up frothy phlegm – sounds like they have something stuck in their throat
- Coughing through the night and struggling to sleep
- Lethargic
- Occasionally some dogs may not want to eat or drink
- Occasionally dogs may develop discharge from their nose or eyes.

Diagnosis – This is usually made from the description of the cough and from the vet's examination. In dogs with kennel cough the trachea is sensitive so pinching the trachea will elicit the cough. This is called the tracheal pinch test.

Treatment – On occasion no treatment is required if the symptoms are very mild, however in most dogs treatment will be initiated with anti-inflammatories and antibiotics which work against the bacteria involved. Your dog should show a great improvement in 1-2 weeks but occasionally it can take 6 weeks for the cough to clear. Occasionally kennel cough can lead to a syndrome called chronic tracheobronchial syndrome when your dog continues to cough post infection. If this is the case then further investigations may be necessary e.g. blood sample and chest x-rays to rule out more serious causes of coughing before treatment is begun with anti-coughing medications for this syndrome.

Ongoing management – Your dog must be kept separate from other dogs until they have stopped coughing to reduce the spread of the disease.

There is a vaccine available against kennel cough and it is included in our annual vaccination price. It is very effective at reducing the clinical signs of a kennel cough infection and often completely prevents infection. Because the vaccine is alive (although it has been changed so it can't cause serious disease) it needs to be squirted up your dog's nose which most dogs tolerate very well although it can in 10% of dogs cause a mild cough after the vaccine. The vaccine needs to be administered annually. The onset of immunity against the bacteria involved is 3 days and the onset of immunity against the virus involved is 3 weeks so please allow adequate time for the vaccine to work before putting your dog in kennels.