

# Vaccinating for **Kennel Cough**



Kennel Cough is the common name for a group of diseases similar to the human cold or flu. Symptoms are fever, swollen tonsils or lymph nodes and a deep, "honking," keep-you-and-the-dog-up-all-night cough that takes weeks to go away. Although rarely fatal, it can lead to pneumonia in puppies, geriatric pets or those already ill with another disease.

There are several different bacteria and viruses that can cause Kennel Cough. All are very contagious, especially when multiple dogs are in the same room together. When a sick dog coughs or sneezes it sprays the infectious virus or bacteria particles into the air, where they float around and are inhaled by another dog across the room or in the cage next door. It can also be spread by touching noses, sharing food or water bowls, or sniffing around where a sick dog has been.

The most common cause of Kennel Cough is a bacteria named **Bordetella bronchiseptica**. The vaccine for Bordetella is either a nasalgen (nose drops), or an injectable. Both give effective immunity for 6-12 months. Parainfluenza is a viral cause of Kennel Cough. There are two strains of parainfluenza vaccine contained in the DHLPP vaccine that most dogs receive. Some Bordetella vaccines contain extra parainfluenza vaccine as well. There are also some less common viral causes of Kennel Cough for which we have no vaccine, so even a vaccinated dog can occasionally contract the disease.

There have been numerous studies reported recently in the veterinary literature about Bordetella infection causing upper respiratory disease in cats as well as dogs. Unlike the cough seen in canines, cats develop sneezing and sinusitis. A vaccine for cats is also available.

All boarding kennels require that dogs be vaccinated against Kennel Cough. Some require Bordetella vaccination be given within the previous 6 months to keep immunity high. Many veterinary clinics require vaccination before elective surgeries to prevent the spread of disease in the hospital. The last thing your pet needs after major surgery is a fever and a cough!

Most groomers do not require Bordetella vaccination, but they should. Multiple dogs in and out of one room are the ideal breeding ground for infection. Your pet should also be vaccinated if you go to a dog park, obedience training, hunting or hiking with other dogs, or if you encounter other pets while walking your dog. Even sitting in the waiting room of the veterinary clinic, or entering the clinic for dentistry, x-rays or other procedures, puts the pet at risk for contracting this annoying disease. Only pets confined to their own house or yard have no risk of catching Kennel Cough.

**As with most diseases, prevention is easy and cost effective. Be sure your pet is vaccinated!**

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