



# Avoiding Kennel Cough



Shaping the future of animal health

**Virbac**

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Kennel Cough is a disease that dogs can catch very easily when put together in large groups such as in boarding kennels - hence “kennel” cough. A single dog in a single kennel at home is far less likely to catch it.

Fatalities caused by Kennel Cough are extremely rare, but it is a very uncomfortable illness and upsetting for both the dog and the owner.

Kennel Cough is a highly infectious disease, but the risk of infection can be significantly reduced by vaccination.



## What is Kennel Cough?

Kennel Cough Syndrome is brought about by a combination of infectious agents working together to irritate the lining of your dog's windpipe and lungs.

- Unfortunately, the irritation is made worse by the simple act of breathing, and will not go away until the organisms that are causing it are eliminated.
- Kennel Cough is a dry, hacking persistent cough, triggered by any activity, no matter how light. Your dog will cough at least every few minutes - often followed by retching, as if it has something lodged in its throat.
- There are many different infections that can contribute towards Kennel Cough, but by far the most common offenders are a bacterium called *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and the canine parainfluenza virus.



### How does a dog get infected?

- Kennel Cough is highly infectious, and will quickly spread through any group of dogs that are kept in close contact with each other, especially in an enclosed environment.
- Typical situations where your dog might get infected by Kennel Cough are:
  - being kept in boarding kennels
  - attending a dog show
  - dog obedience classes
  - participating in field trials
  - dog day care centres

However, as Kennel Cough is transmitted on the breath, your dog could conceivably be exposed to it by something as innocent as a walk in the park.

- To complicate matters further, the true symptoms of Kennel Cough may not become apparent for several days - and a dog that has apparently fully recovered from Kennel Cough may remain infectious for weeks afterwards.
- It is important that you take all this into consideration in the event of your dog becoming infected. It can be extremely difficult to pin down the exact moment your dog came into contact with the disease.
- Prevention prior to contact with strange dogs is therefore an important consideration.



## How is Kennel Cough treated?

- Kennel Cough can be compared to the Common Cold in humans - sometimes it just needs to run its course, which typically takes a week or two.
- However, you should always take your dog along to the vets if it displays the symptoms of Kennel Cough, as these could be masking a more serious problem. Be on the safe side, and get it checked out.
- Your vet may or may not decide to prescribe antibiotics or other medicines, depending upon other symptoms that may have become aggravated in your dog.
- Again, prevention is better than cure - as any prolonged period of Kennel Cough might lower your dog's defences to more serious infections.



### Avoiding Kennel Cough

- Perhaps the simplest way to avoid Kennel Cough is to keep your dog isolated from all other dogs at all times - but this is neither practical nor healthy!
- If your dog is a house-bound companion which rarely comes into prolonged contact with other dogs then it is perhaps not necessary for you to worry too much about Kennel Cough - but the only way to be sure is to vaccinate.
- If your dog regularly comes into contact with other dogs, or is likely to for a one-off occasion (see the examples on page 4), you should seriously consider vaccination against Kennel Cough.
- If you have your dog regularly vaccinated against the standard diseases, it will already have some protection against [canine parainfluenza](#) - but this will not protect it from the most common component of Kennel Cough Syndrome, which is the [Bordetella bronchiseptica](#) bacterium.
- For the best protection from Kennel Cough, you will need to have your dog vaccinated by your vet.
- The Kennel Cough vaccination is unusual, in that it is administered into the nose via an applicator. Your dog might feel a little discomfort initially, but don't forget your vet will have administered this treatment many times before to other dogs.

## When vaccination against Kennel Cough is essential...

- Since the availability of a reliable Kennel Cough vaccine, it is increasingly the case that places where dogs congregate are insisting upon the vaccination as a matter of course.
- This responsible policy makes tremendous sense, and you should support it, as it helps to guarantee protection for all the dogs present - including yours.
- So, vaccination against Kennel Cough should be considered if you are thinking of taking your dog to any of the following:
  - boarding kennels
  - dog shows
  - obedience classes
  - field trials
  - puppy socialisation groups
- You might be refused entry to any of the above, or similar occasions if you cannot produce evidence of vaccination.
- Finally, remember that if you do need to have your dog vaccinated against Kennel Cough you must allow for the correct establishment period to have elapsed after the vaccination. Your vet will advise, but expect it to be a minimum of 72 hours.





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