

## *Kennel Cough*

*Kennel cough is one of the more common upper respiratory diseases seen in our practice. Affected pets present with a harsh, dry cough that sound similar to a "goose honking". It is caused by bacteria, viruses or a combination of the two. The risk of this disease can be attenuated by vaccination and a mindful consideration of you pet's environmental vulnerabilities.*

*The disease is very contagious and causes an inflammation of the upper respiratory passages and occasionally the lungs. Fortunately, despite the loud frequent coughing that is associated with this disease, dogs with healthy immune systems can overcome the infection after several weeks. However, in severely affected puppies and debilitated older animals, kennel cough can lead to a pneumonia that is potentially life threatening.*

*The medical name of the infection is tracheobronchitis and the virus that is most commonly implicated is the canine parainfluenza and adenovirus. The bacteria usually involved are bordetella and mycoplasma. The disease is usually limited to pets, however there have been rare cases where a child or an adult with a compromised immune system can catch an infection from a dog that is secreting bordetella bacteria. This condition is known as human bordetellosis.*

*The most common symptom I see is the harsh, dry cough that is accompanied by retching. Frequently, the retching produces a white foam. The cough is aggravated by exercise, excitement or pressure on the trachea by a collar. In*

*advanced cases a fever is present with lethargy and loss of appetite as another symptom of the infection.*

*Most often, kennel cough is treated with antibiotics that kill the bacteria that are infecting the respiratory system. An antibiotic will not kill a virus; however, by overcoming secondary bacterial infection, the dog's immune system has a much better opportunity to be successful in fighting the disease. Additional treatment includes cough suppressants. They can only be used in those animals that are not producing mucous and fluid exudates. Additionally, I recommend that exercise be severely curtailed, pets be isolated from other dogs and plenty of water be provided. In dogs with a persistent dry cough, the use of a vaporizer can aid the healing process by moisturizing respiratory tissue.*

*The diagnosis of kennel cough is made by assessing the clinical symptoms, the dog's vaccination status and any recent history of exposure to other animals in dog shows, boarding kennels or training classes.*

*Prevention can be accomplished in several ways. There are vaccines, which when administered prior to exposure, can prevent or diminish the symptoms of tracheobronchitis. The most common vaccine is given in droplets in the nose. It should be given at least three days prior to exposure and boosted at 6 month intervals in animals that will be frequently exposed to other pets.*

*I would recommend that pet owners carefully consider their choice of boarding facilities. A personal inspection will help you determine if the environment is sanitary and suited for the emotional disposition of your canine companion. Consider*

*the age of your pet and his personality. Some animals are stressed by the barking of other dogs or have anxiety caused by separation. These animals will have greater potential for risk from infectious disease because their immune systems may be compromised by the boarding kennel environment. Other pets may thrive in these conditions, happily occupied by the sights, smells and sounds of their fellow boarders.*

*There are options available for those pets who do not do well in a kennel environment .Leaving your pet at home and having a dog walker come frequently to attend to his or her needs is a good alternative. Some of my clients prefer the advantages of having someone stay in their home while they are away.*

*For additional information about Kennel Cough or other infectious diseases, visit the encyclopedia section of my website: [www.manchestervet.com](http://www.manchestervet.com).*