

Coping with **Kennel Cough**



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Dr Larry van Niekerk is a veterinary specialist surgeon, veterinary business consultant and speaker. He is founder and Chairman of the Institute for Veterinary Practice Development.

Tracheobronchitis is highly contagious and causes a harsh, dry hacking or rasping cough in dogs.

Q *We recently adopted KB from a shelter. A few days later she started coughing and was diagnosed with Kennel Cough by the vet. After a course of antibiotics she has recovered quickly and is settling in well with us. How long does the Kennel Cough stay in the dog's system before it physically presents itself, as KB only showed symptoms after four days of being out of the kennel? Should I be worrying about my other little rescue dog, Wallee, and the cats?*

Kerry MacDonald – Kommetjie, Cape Town

A Of all the conditions dogs can get, this is the equivalent of the mild flu in humans. Kennel Cough is highly infectious with a very short incubation period. Just like a flu virus in your family, some will “catch” it whilst some will be spared. As Wallee was also a rescue dog, he may well have been exposed before and not displayed signs of Kennel Cough, or indeed, he may go down with the symptoms within a few days of exposure to KB. Your cats, fortunately, cannot contract canine Kennel Cough.

WHAT IS KENNEL COUGH?

Kennel Cough is the common name for a group of respiratory viruses and bacteria that cause an acute or chronic inflammation of the trachea and upper bronchial airways, named Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis.

It is highly contagious and causes a harsh, dry hacking or rasping cough in dogs.

The cough may be aggravated by excitement and occur in spasms that end in retching or gagging of white foam and even fluid that may contain flecks of blood. The body temperature may elevate to a fever if secondary bacterial infection develops, resulting in loss of appetite, depression, red eyes and sneezing.

Puppies and unvaccinated dogs are at greater risk, but even older dogs can become infected.

The most important health risk categories are –

- Boarding kennels
- Dog parks
- Veterinary health care visits
- Daily walks
- Obedience training

- Hunting
- Dog shows
- Any other dog-to-dog social contact or interaction

The incubation period is typically 3-10 days, but symptoms can last a few weeks in some cases.

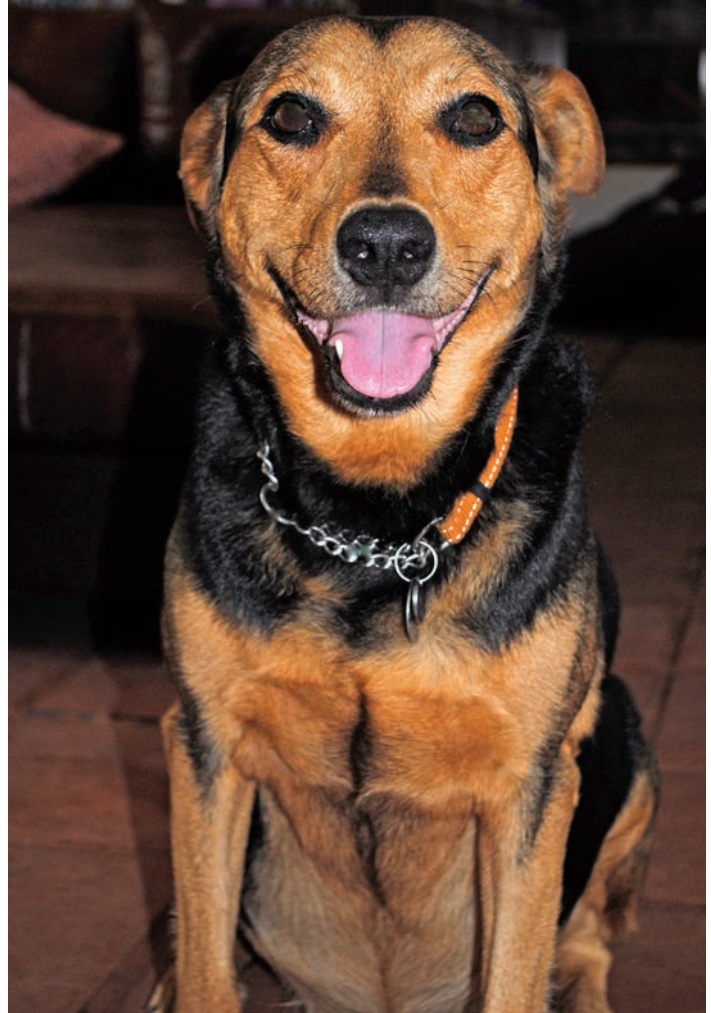
TREATING KENNEL COUGH

Treatment is aimed at preventing secondary bacterial infection and decreasing the uncomfortable coughing symptoms.

Vaccines, whether intranasal or subcutaneous, cover the most important agents causing Kennel Cough used to protect animals at high risk of infection.

Many animals that have been vaccinated may still become infected although the symptoms will be milder and shorter-lived than those not vaccinated. The main reason why animals would still develop signs of the disease is that the vaccines protect against Parainfluenza and/or Bordetellabronchiseptica. All other causes of Kennel Cough in dogs are not covered by vaccination.

Please discuss your animal's lifestyle and vaccination protocol with your veterinarian. 🐾



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