

Points on Pets: Kennel cough is not too much of a concern

by R.G._Elmor_DVM

Q: It seems like every time we leave our dog at the boarding kennel for more than two or three days she comes home with a dry, raspy cough. We do not remember our previous dog having this problem.

Is it possible that our current dog has a weaker immune system than our previous dog? Should we change boarding kennels?

Are there vaccines available to prevent this coughing? Our dog seems to be healthy and happy most of the time.

A: Although there are many important factors regarding your dog's coughing following boarding, it is likely that she is experiencing bouts of kennel cough. You should have your dog examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible to be sure that there are no other serious abnormalities causing her cough. During the examination, your veterinarian can prescribe a complete wellness program for your dog. This will include recommendations regarding vaccinations, internal and external parasite control as well as proper nutrition.

Kennel cough is an upper respiratory disease complex in dogs. Although the exact cause has not been well defined, and might vary in different situations, it is usually a combination of viruses, bacteria and adverse environmental conditions including cold temperatures, drafts and high humidity.

Kennel cough can occasionally occur in dogs housed in the best boarding kennels. Therefore, changing boarding kennels might not prevent your dog's coughing problem.

The signs of kennel cough in most dogs are mild and do not require veterinary treatment; however, as you know, the dry, hacking coughing for several days following boarding can be irritating for both you and your dog.

Although kennel cough is seen in dogs of all ages, it is believed by most authorities that some immunity does develop against many of the causative agents as dogs get older. Vaccines are available to help prevent kennel cough. Your veterinarian can advise you regarding the use of these in your dog.

Q: Our church's youth group has decided to do a dog dip as a fundraiser for a future missions trip. Although we want to support our kids, we are concerned about the safety and health of our dog if we take her to the dip.

Among other things, we are worried about her receiving too much medication. We do not know whether or not a veterinarian is in charge of this activity.

Are we overly cautious? Should we just give the youth group a nice donation and decline the dip?

A: Being concerned about your dog's safety, while considering to have her dipped at a youth group fundraiser without proper veterinary supervision, is wise. Because pet dips contain toxic substances designed to kill and prevent external parasites, they should only be applied by knowledgeable professionals. Both the safety of the pets being dipped and the safety of the people doing it should be of concern.

Before taking your dog to a dip, you should ask your veterinarian about the advisability of it. Being overly cautious is much better than having your pet harmed.

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