

Canine Cough & Canine Flu

What are the differences? How can I help my dog?



Canine Cough

What is canine cough and what are the symptoms?

Canine cough, also known as kennel cough, is a type of respiratory infection that causes inflammation of the throat. It is similar to a chest cold in humans. Canine cough can be bacterial or viral.

Symptoms of canine cough include:

- A dry cough or “honking”
- Gagging or coughing to the point where your dog coughs up white phlegm
- Fever
- Nasal discharge

How is canine cough spread?

Canine cough is highly contagious and is an airborne illness. Much like the common cold in humans, canine cough is spread through the air by sneezing and coughing. Sharing resources, like a water bowl, can also spread it. Canine cough is often referred to as kennel cough because it can spread rapidly in places like boarding kennels or animal shelters where there are many dogs in the same place breathing the same air and sharing space, but it can also be spread just by walking your dog in the same area as other dogs even if they do not see and meet other dogs. Because this disease is airborne, cleaning and disinfecting can only go so far in preventing it being spread to others.

How do I prevent my dog from getting canine cough?

Just like the common cold, if your dog spends time around other dogs it can be hard to prevent canine cough. There are certain times of year where canine cough may be more prevalent. At these times you can avoid bringing your dog around other dogs. There is a vaccine to help fight against kennel cough, but just like with the common cold or flu in humans, these diseases tend to evolve quickly and different strains can be prevalent in the environment. This means that the current vaccine may not be effective in protecting your dog against the current strain in the community. It is best to consult with your veterinarian for the most up to date information on how to prevent canine cough.

What do I do if my dog has canine cough?

If your dog begins showing symptoms, it is recommended to contact your veterinarian. Typically canine cough just needs to run its course through your dog's immune system and other medical intervention will not be required. Your dog could take up to 3 weeks to feel better. If your dog is showing symptoms, they need to be isolated from other dogs immediately. Similar to humans with a cold, your dog needs rest to heal. You can also provide a humidifier or cough suppressants for symptom relief. Monitor eating and drinking and call your vet if your dog stops eating and drinking, or if symptoms are getting worse.



Canine Flu

What is canine flu and what are the symptoms?

Canine flu is a viral infection similar to the flu in humans. The canine flu was first identified in dogs in 2004, and is believed to be a strain that was infecting horses and evolved to infect dogs as well. There are currently two strains of canine influenza prevalent in the country.

Symptoms of canine flu include:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Fever
- Lethargy

The symptoms of canine flu are very similar to canine cough. If your dog is exhibiting any of the above symptoms it is best to consult with your veterinarian so they can determine which disease is afflicting your dog. This will also help monitor the spread of canine flu across the country.

How is the canine flu spread?

The canine flu is highly contagious and is an airborne disease. It is easily spread between dogs through sneezing, coughing, and sharing resources, and can be spread at any time. This is a new disease in the dog community and is still spreading to new parts of the country, with cases being reported in Massachusetts as of August 2018. This means all dogs are equally susceptible to getting sick.

How can I prevent my dog from getting the flu?

If there are known cases of the canine flu in your area, it might be best to avoid places with lots of dogs with unknown health status. You can also consult your veterinarian about the canine influenza vaccination to see if that is a good option for your dog.

What do I do if my dog has canine flu?

If your dog is showing symptoms of canine flu, contact your veterinarian to confirm. All dogs showing symptoms of canine cough or canine flu should be isolated from other dogs and allowed to rest and recover at home. Limit the places you bring your dog until they are no longer contagious. This might mean less walks but there are plenty of ways to keep your dog occupied at home while allowing them to recover. Just like humans, dogs might feel sick for around a week or so, and then feel better after the virus has run its course, but you can talk to your veterinarian about symptom relief. Monitor your dog for eating and drinking, and let your vet know if your dog's behavior changes or if symptoms are getting worse.

