



Kennel Cough

Important information you need to know to keep your dog healthy.



“Kennel Cough” (medically known as CIRDC-Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease) is an umbrella term used to refer to canine respiratory infection that may be caused by several bacteria and viruses working alone or in combination.

What Is CIRDC?

CIRDC is caused by several viruses and bacteria working alone or in combination. Of these bacteria, *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, is one cause of respiratory infectious disease in dogs. Although CIRDC is usually a mild disease and recovery is usually complete, we strive to prevent it when possible. The main symptom is a gagging cough, sometimes accompanied by sneezing and nasal discharge, which can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks. Although this coughing is very annoying, it does not usually develop into anything more serious. However, we do recommend you consult with your veterinarian. It can lower your dog’s resistance to other disease making him susceptible to secondary infections. Some veterinarians like to compare CIRDC to the every day cold that a child may pick up in school. Puppies less than 6 months of age or dogs who have respiratory illness are more at risk for complicated disease.

How Can My Dog Catch CIRDC?

Similar to the common cold in humans, the organisms that cause CIRDC are normally airborne. Dogs can catch this disease simply by being close to other infected dogs. The most common way to catch a case of CIRDC is through exposure to unfamiliar dogs such as in a boarding kennel situation. CIRDC is extremely infectious and is spread in the air by infected dogs mainly through coughing and sneezing. Similar to humans who can be silent carriers of a virus, a dog can have these organisms as part of its normal population of nasal bacteria and not be sick but still transmit the infection to another dog.

How is it cured?

Just as in the common cold, CIRDC does not always require treatment. It can be left to just but must run its course. Veterinarians frequently do not prescribe antibiotics, since a virus often causes it. However, antibiotics will be prescribed to dogs who are showing more signs of illness like discolored mucous, fever, lethargy, puppies, other respiratory illness for example. Sometimes cough suppressants will be prescribed to reduce excessive coughing, but these medications do not attack the disease itself.



The Bordetella Vaccination does not guarantee your dog will not contract CIRDC. It protects against SOME of the causes, but not all.

What Is The Bordetella Vaccination?

This is a vaccination that protects against SOME of the causes of CIRDC. This does not mean that your dog is 100% protected from all the causes of CIRDC. Similar to humans, just because you are vaccinated against Whooping Cough, does not mean you cannot get another type of cough. Most Bordetella vaccines guard against Parainfluenza and Adenovirus Type II as well.

How Is The Bordetella Vaccination Given?

There are two types: Intranasal and Injection. The intranasal vaccine is a more “natural “ exposure. It is best to have the vaccination done at least one week before the dog comes to daycare or for boarding. Doses given immediately before kenneling are not protective. Unfortunately, the intranasal does not last very long. Dose recommendations range from every six months to one year.

The injectable vaccine is better for long immunity duration.

Either vaccination does not 100% guarantee that the dog will not get an infection, but it may lessen the course of the disease.

Many veterinary clinics give the intranasal vaccine. Some prefer the injectable vaccine. There is no consensus that one type is more effective than the other, however, some prefer to administer the nasal vaccination in puppies and then follow up with the injection. We recommend consulting with your veterinarian on the best course of vaccinations for your dog.

Does The Bordetella Vaccination Give A 100% Guarantee That My Dog Will Not Get CIRDC?

No. However, it does greatly reduce the chances of acquiring CIRDC and will usually notably lessen the severity of the disease should your dog get it.

Why Is The Bordetella Vaccination Not A 100% Guarantee That My Dog Won't Get CIRDC?

This is because CIRDC can be caused by many different viruses or bacteria, not just Bordetella bronchiseptica (the bacteria we are vaccinating against). Bordetella bronchiseptica is a bacteria that worsens CIRDC, so vaccinating against this particular bacteria provides the best protection we have against severe cases of respiratory illness. Some of the vaccines are also protecting against two other viruses that cause CIRDC (Parainfluenza and Adenovirus Type II). There are other bacteria & viruses that can cause CIRDC.

Some measures may reduce overall risk exposure, but there is no 100% guarantee way to prevent CIRDC.

Are There Any Adverse Side Effects To The Bordetella Vaccination?

While no medication, nutritional supplement or food substance that is taken into the body is ever completely without potential side effects, the CIRDC vaccination is one of the safest on the market and side effects (fever, malaise) are normal for a vaccine. The most common minor side effect we sometimes see is occasional coughing or sneezing during the first few hours after the vaccine is administered.

Why Does The Pooch Pitt Require Vaccination Every 6 Months?

The Pooch Pitt's environment is designed for dogs to engage in play. That means that your dog will be interacting with many different dogs. Similar to a preschool, where kids occasionally pass around colds, CIRDC can get passed around at kennels. Because we are designed to encourage interaction, we are more at risk for CIRDC. The enjoyment the dogs get from playing with each other versus the risk of exposure is a trade off.

We require the Bordetella vaccination every six months to help protect the health of all of the dogs at The Pooch Pitt. Because CIRDC can be contracted from any interaction with another affected dog - at a dog park, in the vet's waiting room or anywhere dogs come into contact - and because the incubation period is roughly 3 to 14 days, we try to take every precaution to reduce the chances of spreading the illness, much like people do by getting the flu shot.

What Can I Do To Prevent My Dog From Catching CIRDC?

Unless your dog never leaves the house, there is no 100% guaranteed way to prevent your dog from catching CIRDC. There are some measures that can be taken to reduce your dog's risk, such as avoiding dog parks, pet stores and any other areas where there may be sick dogs. CIRDC can be contracted anywhere, even from your neighbor's dog during a walk around the neighborhood. Realistically, avoiding all interaction with dogs is not a great lifestyle for your dog, so it is best to keep your dog up-to-date on the vaccination, and understand the signs, symptoms and treatment of the disease.

Is this virus a constant problem?

No. CIRDC, like the flu, is often seasonal. It also tends to hit an entire area at one time. When veterinarians begin to see cases, they normally come from every kennel in town, dog park users, as well as from individual dog owners whose dogs were not kenneled at all. When the virus has run its course, the Veterinarians might not see another case for months.

CIRD, like the flu, is often seasonal and tends to hit an entire area at one time. The virus can be present anywhere, and can travel considerable distances through the air.

Does CIRD only occur in dog daycares or kennels?

No. Since this virus can be present anywhere, and can travel for considerable distances through the air, they can affect any dog...even one which never leaves its own back yard. But CIRD is more likely to occur when the concentration of dogs is greater such as at a dog show, kennel, veterinarian offices and hospitals as well as pet shops. Dogs can also be exposed while running loose or while being walked near other dogs or playing in the park. Again, our environment is similar to a child's school or daycare where germs that cause colds can be passed around.

If my dog has already had CIRD, can he get it again?

Yes. The immunity to Canine Cough can wane over time, so periodic boosters are required. Also, Canine Cough is the name applied to a general coughing syndrome and can be caused by several different infectious agents. If your dog has had Canine Cough due to one "germ" he could catch it again from another "germ" which he doesn't have immunity. A good analogy is that just because you've had a cold this doesn't mean you can't get another one in the future.

My Dog is showing symptoms of CIRD, should I take him/her to my veterinarian?

In some cases, Canine Cough will resolve on its own without the aid of antibiotics. In other cases, it will need to be treated with antibiotics. We recommend calling your veterinarian and asking if your dog needs to be seen. Always call the veterinarian if your dog is less than 6 months old, has other respiratory diseases, is lethargic, has discolored discharge/mucous, or inappetance. Based on the symptoms, your veterinarian will tell you if it's a mild case that your dog can fight on its own, or if it appears to be a more serious case and needs to be treated. If your dog is showing signs of respiratory illness, it may not visit us again until 2 weeks after the symptoms have ceased. Just like human coughs, the cough can last, on average, 3 weeks.

The information included in this packet has been validated by:
Pleasant Valley Veterinary Clinic
211 E. McMurray Road
McMurray, PA 15317
Ph 724.941.5484

