

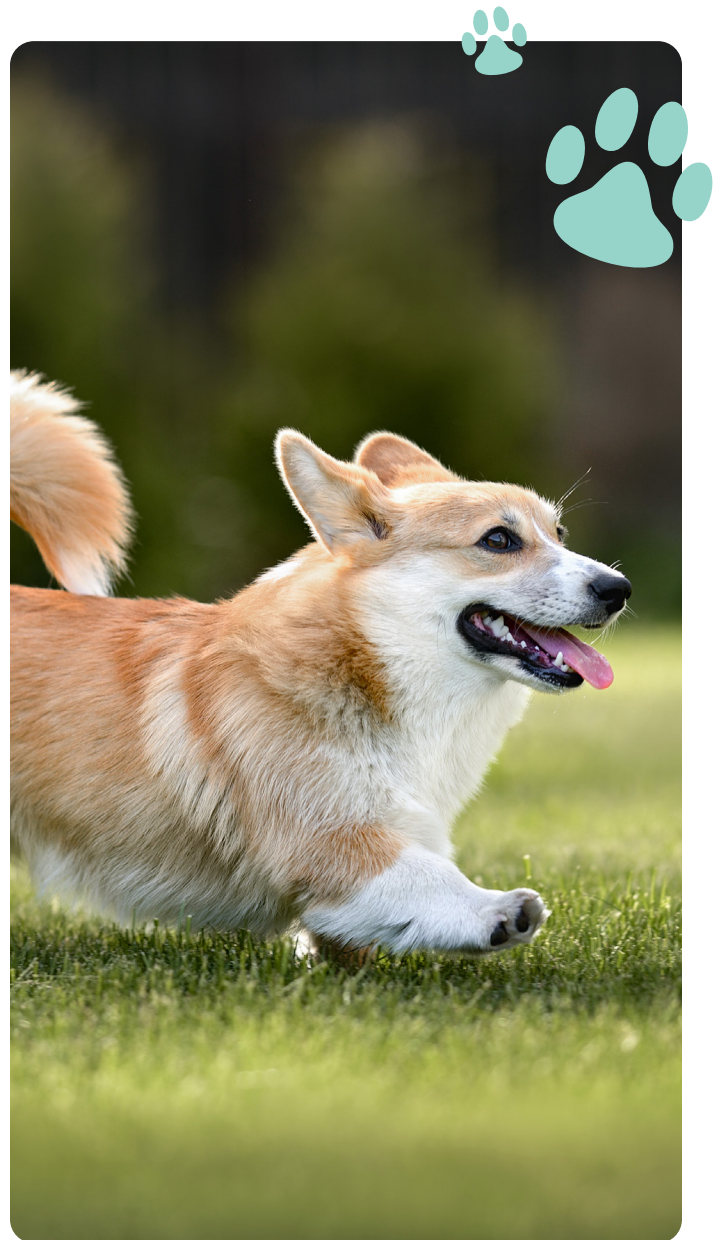


THE BASICS: BORDETELLA (KENNEL COUGH)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Bordetella bronchiseptica is one of the most common causes of kennel cough, a **highly contagious respiratory infection** that affects dogs of all ages. While most cases are mild, the infection can become serious in puppies, senior dogs, or dogs with weakened immune systems.

- **Bordetella is part of a group of infections** known as canine infectious respiratory disease complex (CIRDC), commonly called kennel cough.
- Dogs most often catch *Bordetella* by **inhaling airborne bacteria** from the coughs and sneezes of infected dogs.
- The infection can also spread through **contact with contaminated surfaces** like shared water bowls, toys, and bedding.
- Dogs are at higher risk in settings where they're in **close contact with other dogs**, such as boarding facilities, daycare, groomers, dog parks, and training classes.
- Dogs can **remain contagious for weeks after symptoms resolve**, even if they look and feel perfectly healthy.
- Many boarding facilities, groomers, and daycares **require proof of a current Bordetella vaccine** before admission.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Visit avma.org and search "Kennel Cough"

SYMPTOMS OF BORDETELLELLA

The hallmark symptom of Bordetella is a persistent, dry, hacking cough that many owners describe as sounding like a honking goose. Other symptoms may include:

- **Coughing or gagging, sometimes followed by retching or producing white mucus**
- **Sneezing**
- **Runny nose or watery eyes**
- **Decreased appetite**
- **Lethargy or low energy**



In most cases, dogs with Bordetella will continue to eat and stay active aside from the cough. However, if your dog develops a fever, stops eating, or seems lethargic, contact your veterinarian right away, as these may be signs of a more serious infection like pneumonia.

PREVENTING BORDETELLELLA

- The Bordetella vaccine is available in injectable, intranasal (nasal spray), and oral forms. Your veterinarian can help you decide which option is best for your dog.
- Vaccination can begin as early as 6–8 weeks of age, with boosters recommended annually, or every six months for dogs who are frequently around other dogs.
- While the vaccine may not prevent infection entirely, vaccinated dogs typically experience milder symptoms and recover faster.
- To further reduce risk, avoid sharing your dog's toys, bowls, and other items with unfamiliar dogs, and keep your dog away from dogs that are coughing or showing signs of respiratory illness.

- Because pressure on the throat can worsen coughing, consider using a harness instead of a neck collar if your dog is currently coughing.

TREATMENT OF BORDETELLELLA

Most mild cases of Bordetella resolve on their own within one to two weeks with rest and supportive care. However, depending on the severity of your dog's symptoms, your veterinarian may recommend:

- Antibiotics to treat the bacterial infection and prevent secondary complications
- Cough suppressants to provide comfort (unless your dog has a productive cough or pneumonia)
- Rest and isolation from other dogs until your dog fully recovers

If your dog's cough does not improve within a week of treatment, contact your veterinarian for a follow-up exam. Persistent coughing may indicate pneumonia or another underlying condition.

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