

## **Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease**

As the weather continues to get colder and colder, it is important to stay aware of the risks close confinement can pose on disease spread. People can come down with colds during the winter months as we move indoors and closer to one another, and the same can be said for our pets too. "Kennel cough" is one example of disease that can easily be spread when pets are kept in close confinement. Kennel cough is an infectious bronchitis of dogs known for the harsh hacking cough that sounds as if something is lodged in the pet's throat. A variety of organisms can be involved in a case of kennel cough, and it would be unlikely for only one agent to be the culprit by itself. Possible causes range from bacterial to viral and include bordetella, parainfluenza virus, canine influenza virus, canine distemper virus and mycoplasma to name a few. One of the most common is bordetella, however it typically does not travel alone and is merely one agent amongst many in the kennel cough disease complex.

An infected dog sheds their bacteria and/or viruses in their respiratory secretions, such as the discharge from the nose and mouth after sneezing and coughing. These secretions then become aerosolized and can be inhaled by a healthy dog. Other modes of transmission can occur as well, such as on toys, food and water bowls or other shared items. The incubation period ranges from two to fourteen days before the development of disease- a cough! An uncomplicated case of kennel cough can improve, if not resolve on its own, within one week. However, several infectious agents in the kennel cough complex are capable of causing a bronchitis to progress to pneumonia, a much more life threatening problem. Vaccination for some of these agents can help protect your pet, especially if they travel to areas where many other pets go such as the groomer, boarding facilities and dog parks.

So remember, if you plan on traveling with your pet this holiday season or are boarding them while you are away, please ensure they are appropriately vaccinated prior to travel. Otherwise, if your pet comes down with a cough or any other signs of respiratory disease, do not hesitate to contact your veterinary office for a health check.