

Veterinary Fact Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions - Kennel Cough

This FAQ explains the importance of appropriate identification and management of Kennel Cough in greyhound racing kennels.

What is Kennel Cough?

Kennel Cough, or Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC), is a highly contagious disease in dogs, caused by a number of upper respiratory viruses (including canine parainfluenza virus) and bacteria (usually *Bordetella bronchiseptica*). A table of the infectious agents which can cause Kennel Cough is given at the end of this document.

How do dogs get Kennel Cough?

Kennel Cough is spread as droplets in the air from a coughing dog to a healthy dog that come into close proximity. Once a greyhound has inhaled the infection, it usually takes between five and seven days for symptoms to appear. It is important to note that even after coughing has ceased and your greyhound appears well, it may remain infectious for up to three months.

What are the symptoms of Kennel Cough?

The symptoms of Kennel Cough include:

- runny nose
- sneezing
- dry, hacking cough

How long does Kennel Cough last?

Depending on the general health of your greyhound, the exact infectious agent(s) associated with the disease, and your greyhound's vaccination status, Kennel Cough can last from a few days to several weeks.

Can Kennel Cough be prevented?

Annual vaccination against *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and canine parainfluenza virus (part of the C5 vaccination) can aid in the prevention of Kennel Cough outbreaks and help to reduce the incidence and/or severity of the disease in racing kennels. Although Kennel Cough is often caused by a combination of viruses and bacteria, it is often the *Bordetella bronchiseptica* component that causes the severe cough, and, through that coughing, facilitates the spread of disease.

Vaccination to prevent the disease is especially important because dogs with Kennel Cough can continue to spread the infection for up to three months after their symptoms have disappeared. Kennel Cough vaccinations can be obtained through your veterinarian in injectable, intranasal (up the nose) or oral forms. The intranasal and oral vaccinations can be far more effective in preventing the spread of Kennel Cough, as they help the immune system react more rapidly than the injection. This is because the intranasal and oral vaccines induce an immune response in the mucus membrane

lining of the nasal and oral passages, the first line of defence, reducing the likelihood that the viruses and bacteria can gain entry into the animal.

Please note that for Racing Rules, the required C5 vaccination can be given in any combination (though the intranasal Kennel Cough vaccination is recommended). The injectable *Bordetella bronchiseptica* vaccine is NOT accepted for entry to GAP Victoria however. Options for GAP are therefore **either** C3 + the intranasal Kennel Cough vaccine **or** C4 + oral *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. For entry into GAP the C3 can be given up to 2½ years prior, but because immunity levels for Kennel Cough wane rapidly compared to those for other infectious diseases, and because many greyhounds from across the state are mixing in close proximity, the Kennel Cough components must have been administered within the last 6 months. There are different intranasal and oral Kennel Cough vaccinations available, speak to your veterinarian about your options. Further information regarding vaccination can be found in the *Greyhound Vaccination Requirements Fact Sheet*¹.

Are there any other ways to protect my dog from Kennel Cough?

Maintaining good biosecurity is key to preventing Kennel Cough from entering your kennels. New greyhounds on the property should be quarantined on arrival for 7-14 days to ensure they are not showing any signs of Kennel Cough or incubating the disease at time of arrival. For further information, refer to the *Greyhound Fact Sheet FAQ Biosecurity for Participants*².

My greyhound has Kennel Cough, what do I do?

Kennel Cough can spread rapidly through kennels so early recognition and action can help prevent other greyhounds from becoming infected. The sick greyhound should be immediately isolated from all other dogs on your property. Greyhounds in contact with affected greyhounds should be quarantined and monitored closely for symptoms.

The kennel area where your sick greyhound was being kept should be completely disinfected with hospital grade disinfectant. Remember, the disease travels from dog to dog through droplets in the air, so the whole kennel facility should be disinfected and all bedding, drinking and feeding utensils, and lures washed in hot, soapy water. Scrubbing is important to breakdown the surface of infection droplets and prevent spread. Any outdoor housing (e.g. undercover kennel areas in day yards etc) should also be disinfected. In addition, ventilating your kennel building (opening doors at either end to allow fresh air in) will also help reduce disease spread. For further information on good hygiene practices, refer to *Greyhound Fact Sheet Frequently Asked Questions: Greyhound Husbandry (Part 1): Facility Design*³ and *(Part 2): Sanitation*⁴.

Your veterinarian can provide you with information about treatment, isolation/quarantine and vaccination options for the affected greyhound(s) and any other dogs on your property. Greyhounds which become unwell in themselves, are lethargic, anorexic or have severe and/or persistent coughing (>24 hours) should be seen by your veterinarian. Diagnostic tests exist to identify any

¹ <https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GRV-Vaccinations-Fact-Sheet-211019.pdf>

² <https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/biosecurity%20information%20for%20participants%20faq%2028.02.20b3d53131-1338-4ce0-a2e3-bfad15faade2.pdf>

³ [https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/greyhound%20husbandry%20\(part%201\)%20facility%20design%20faqs%20\(1\)ada4b046-bb6b-4674-a08b-6f1bd3326e2d.pdf](https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/greyhound%20husbandry%20(part%201)%20facility%20design%20faqs%20(1)ada4b046-bb6b-4674-a08b-6f1bd3326e2d.pdf)

⁴ [https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/greyhound%20husbandry%20\(part%202\)%20sanitation%20faqs%20\(1\)9bb26c81-fb27-451c-99a2-54afd003a133.pdf](https://fasttrack.blob.core.windows.net/fasttrackpublic/stewardsHearing/2020/greyhound%20husbandry%20(part%202)%20sanitation%20faqs%20(1)9bb26c81-fb27-451c-99a2-54afd003a133.pdf)

known infectious agent as listed in Table 1. The use of antibiotics should only be at your veterinarian's discretion. While antibiotics may be needed for certain bacterial infections, they are often unnecessary, and cannot be used to treat viruses. Different antibiotics have different effects and where decided, different types or dose rates may be prescribed depending on the condition. Inappropriate use of antibiotics also encourages antimicrobial resistance, which is of increasing concern to medical professionals as it has the potential to impact on human treatments.

Greyhounds that have Kennel Cough should be scratched from races and not brought to Club facilities as they pose a risk of infection to other greyhounds. You or your veterinarian should also alert GRV to help us monitor for any potential outbreak, and to reduce the risk and minimise the impact of an outbreak, particularly when multiple animals are affected. Email vets@grv.org.au or contact (03) 8329 1100.

My greyhound has Kennel Cough, can I use my own medicine?

No. Always seek veterinary advice prior to administering any medication, including cough medicines. Every year several greyhounds test positive to cough suppressants (antitussives) or expectorants generally purchased over the counter at a pharmacy. A cough suppressant may delay recovery in the case of a productive cough. In some cases, the prohibited substance given will remain in the system for several weeks, e.g. pholcodine has an extremely long half-life and is eliminated very slowly.

Table 1: Kennel Cough – Common infectious agents

Agent	Classification	Transmission	Symptoms	Diagnosis	Susceptible to disinfection	Treatment	Preventable by vaccination or other means?
Adenovirus-2	Virus	Direct contact between infected dogs shedding virus in secretions.	Typical signs of Kennel Cough when involved in disease. Can rarely infect as a sole agent causing mild symptoms.	Usually based on symptoms. Swabs from nose or throat, may not always correlate with presence of disease.	Yes – use hospital grade.	Antibiotics will not treat viral infection but may be needed for secondary bacterial infection.	Vaccination for Adenovirus-1 available and required under Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Code of Practice.
Distemper	Virus	Primarily aerosol transmission (airborne) but can be spread in other body secretions.	Haemorrhagic diarrhoea, vomiting, anorexia, depression and dehydration.	Samples from eyes, discharges.	Yes – use hospital grade. Does not survive in warm or dry environments, can survive in cold.	Supportive care and fluid therapy, antibiotics may be needed for secondary infection.	Vaccination available and required under Greyhound Australasia Rules and Code of Practice.
Canine Respiratory Coronavirus	Virus	Aerosol, direct contact or contaminated material.	Can cause Kennel Cough symptoms alone or in combination with other agents.	Usually based on symptoms. Swabs from nose or throat confirm, results may not always correlate with presence of disease.	Yes – use hospital grade.	Antibiotics will not treat viral infection but may be needed for secondary bacterial infection.	None available.
Parainfluenza	Virus	Aerosol, direct contact or contaminated material.	Limited to dry cough and nasal discharge if only agent implicated, multiagent infections more common and clinical signs can vary.	Usually based on symptoms. Swabs from nose or throat confirm.	Yes – use hospital grade.	Antibiotics will not treat viral infection but may be needed for secondary bacterial infection.	Vaccination available and required under Greyhound Australasia Rules and Code of Practice.
Bordetella bronchiseptica	Bacteria	Aerosol transmission or direct contact.	Typical signs of Kennel Cough. May progress to pneumonia and result in breathing abnormalities and more severe illness.	Swabs from nose or throat, can do a tracheal wash. May require a culture and sensitivity swab to direct therapy.	Yes – use hospital grade.	Antibiotics may be required.	Vaccination available and required under Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Code of Practice.
Mycoplasma	Bacteria	Most commonly aerosol, can occur via direct contact.	Rare to see illness, but can cause nasal discharge. Can cause disease in combination with other agents.	Swabs from nose or throat, can do a tracheal wash. May require a culture and sensitivity swab to direct therapy.	Yes – use hospital grade.	Antibiotics can treat mycoplasma.	No.