Canine Upper Respiratory Illness

Congratulations on adopting a new dog! Because of the close quarters of our canine population here, your new dog or puppy may have been exposed to canine upper respiratory illness. Canine upper respiratory illness is a contagious respiratory disease. It is transmitted by an airborne virus, and often complicated by secondary bacterial infection. It occurs more commonly in puppies and young adult dogs. It is often caught at kennels or shelters where dogs are exposed to many other dogs. Because the virus is airborne, normal cleaning and disinfecting of kennel surfaces cannot eliminate it.

Dogs with kennel cough are usually bright and alert and are usually eating well. They have a dry hacking cough or bouts of deep harsh coughing often followed by gagging motions. The gagging sometimes produces foamy mucus. Most dogs with kennel cough do not have a fever.

If your dog has these symptoms, consult your veterinarian for treatment. Like the common cold, kennel cough is not “cured” but must run its course. Antibiotics may be prescribed to prevent or cure a secondary bacterial infection. Dogs with kennel cough should be kept away from other dogs to prevent exposing them to this very contagious disease.

Parvo Virus Infection

Canine parvo virus is a virus of dogs that causes severe vomiting and diarrhea. The virus is present in the animal’s stool and may also be present in saliva and vomitus. It is spread by an animal coming in contact with contaminated stool and vomitus from an infected animal. This can be direct animal to animal or can be spread by people who come in contact with the virus and bring it to a new environment on their clothes or shoes. Insects and birds can also spread it.

Clinical signs usually appear about 4 days after exposure and start as depression, lack of appetite and vomiting, followed by diarrhea that may have some blood and an extremely foul odor. This is followed by dehydration and severe bloody diarrhea. Death can occur in a few days if the pet is not treated. Puppies are most susceptible to the disease especially between 8-16 weeks of age.

If you are considering adopting a dog from us, especially a puppy, and you already have a dog at home, be sure that your present dog is currently vaccinated against this disease (check with your veterinarian). If your adopted dog shows any signs of having the virus, seek veterinary care right away. Be sure to ask your veterinarian for advice as to follow-up vaccinations.

Through cooperation with local veterinarians, your adopted pet will be given a free examination at any participating veterinary hospital within 14 days of adoption. We strongly encourage you to make an appointment as soon as possible for your new pet to be examined by a veterinarian.