

Coughing dog

Overview

Coughing can be caused by many different conditions. Just like people, dogs cough if their airways are irritated or if they need to clear something (such as mucus).

Conditions that cause coughing vary from mild viral infections (that your dog will usually fight off on their own), to more serious conditions such as heart valve disease that need treatment from a vet.

Contact your vet if your dog has a cough that hasn't cleared up within a few days or they seem unwell in themselves. Keep an eye out for other symptoms such as difficulty breathing, sneezing, a runny nose or weepy eyes.

Causes

Infections

Infections in the airways commonly cause a cough. Infections in the airways tend to be due to bacteria, viruses or sometimes fungus. Infections such as kennel cough tend not to be too serious but are very contagious. Pneumonia, a lung infection is a much more serious condition.

Passive smoking

If you smoke, they smoke. Cigarette smoke can cause coughing and lung disease in our pets.

Lungworm

Lungworm is a worm that lives in the lungs and heart. Lung worm can be fatal but is easily prevented by regular deworming.

Heart disease

Heart disease such as heart valve disease very often causes a cough. It is common in older dogs and certain breeds such as the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

Chronic bronchitis

Chronic bronchitis is inflammation of the lining of the airways. This often affects small breed dogs.

Tracheal collapse

Tracheal collapse is a condition that causes a dog's windpipe to collapse. It often affects toy breeds such as Yorkshire Terriers and is worse when excited or exercising.

Westie-lung

'Westie lung' or 'Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis' is a disease which causes scarring in the lungs that gets worse with time. It commonly affects West Highland White Terriers.

Cancer

Lung tumours often cause coughs due to irritation of the airways. Throat tumours tend to cause a cough due to their position.

Injuries

Falls, trauma and other injuries can damage the lungs, ribs or windpipe. Stick injuries are fairly common, dogs don't often get things stuck in their airways because they usually cough them up, but if they do it can cause serious problems. Sticks are one of the most common objects to get stuck inside and damage a dog's airways'. We advise to against throwing sticks for your dog.

Laryngeal paralysis

Laryngeal paralysis is a type of nerve damage that stops the vocal cords from moving and this prevents the dog from breathing normally. It's common in older, large breed dogs such as Labradors.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if:

- **Their cough doesn't clear up in a few days**
- You think they have an injury or something stuck causing the cough
- Coughing keeps them awake
- They collapse
- They make unusual breathing sounds
- Their gums are an unusual colour
- They are coughing up blood

You know your dog. If you are concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

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