

Coughing dogs

Covid-19 update

There is no evidence to show that dogs can develop symptoms of Covid-19. If your dog develops a cough, contact your vet as usual for advice but rest assured that it's very unlikely to be caused by the Covid-19 virus. For more details, see our information on coronavirus.in.pets.

Overview

- Coughing can be caused by many different conditions, some mild and some a lot more serious.
- 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, and call your vet if you notice any symptoms such as difficulty breathing, sneezing, a runny nose or weepy eyes.

General information and causes

Just like humans, dogs cough when they need to clear something from their airways, or if something has irritated them. The most common causes of coughing in dogs include:

- **Infections** - Bacterial infections (such as [kennel cough](#)) are a common cause of coughing in dogs. Although it more rare, viral and fungal infections can also cause a cough in dogs.
- **Passive smoking** - if you smoke, they smoke - cigarette smoke can cause coughing and lung disease in our pets.
- **Lungworm** - a worm that lives in the lungs and heart. Lungworm 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 and throat tumours tend to cause a cough.
- **Injuries** - Falls, trauma and other injuries can damage the lungs, ribs or windpipe. Dogs don't often get things stuck in their airways because they usually cough them up, but if they do it can cause a serious problem. Sticks are one of the most common objects to get stuck inside and damage a dog's airways'. We advise 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 for an emergency appointment if your dog is struggling to breathe, has pale gums, is breathing very fast or you think they might have something stuck in their throat. Contact your vet for a check-up if your dog has:

- a cough that has lasted for more than a few days
- a cough that keeps them awake at night
- a cough that causes them to collapse
- coughed up blood
- unusual or very loud breathing sounds

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

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