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Dog Coughs. Concerning or Common?

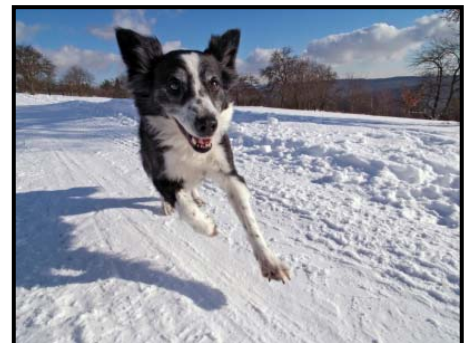
Why that "Common Cough" May Actually Mean Heart Trouble for Fido

A Veterinary Cardiologist Lists the Top Five Coughs, Their Causes and Why Heart Disease

Leads the List

Langhorne, PA –Hacking, gagging and honking like a goose. They're just a few of the coughing sounds puzzling concerned dog parents everywhere. So, when is a cough serious enough to warrant a vet visit? "Every cough does. Even the most common sounding cough can be an indication of a very serious health problem, like Heart Disease and Heart Failure," says Board Certified Veterinary Cardiologist Dr. Megan King, VMD, ACVIM.

Like humans, dogs also cough. "Dog coughs can vary in sound, seriousness and cause, adding to the confusion for pet owners." says Dr. King, of the Center for Animal Referral and Emergency Services (CARES) in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. As a specialist, Heart Disease & Heart Failure top the list of reasons Dr. King treats coughing dogs. "In my practice, a cough is one of the first signs a pet may be suffering from heart disease," explains Dr. King, "which can be fatal."



Of course, there are many more reasons why dogs cough. To briefly explain, Dr. King created the following list of the five most common reasons dogs cough.

Top Five Canine Coughs and Their Causes

#1 – Heart Disease and Heart Failure: Dogs with serious heart problems, like congestive heart failure, often experience bouts of coughing. Heart disease in dogs, like humans, can

be hereditary or developed over the life of the dog.

Canine Heart Disease Quick Facts:

- **Approximately 3.2 million dogs in the US have some form of acquired heart disease (developed during middle age)**
- **About 11% of all dogs have heart disease**
- **The incidence of heart disease increases dramatically with age**
- **About 15% of younger dogs have heart disease**
- **The incidence of heart disease increases to more than 60% in aged dogs**

Sources: American Veterinary Medical Association and www.Yourdogsheart.com

#2 – Respiratory Airway Disease – “This is similar to asthma,” explains Dr. King. Symptoms include wheezing, coughing and fatigue. “Dogs can also develop allergies to pollen and other inhaled irritants, which can trigger a reaction in the mucus membranes lining the respiratory tract. This can lead to a cough that waxes and wanes depending on the dog’s exposure to allergens.”

#3 - Collapsing Trachea – Coughs associated with a collapsing trachea often sound like a goose honk. “It’s a huge problem for small breed dogs. The good news is, it’s often successfully medically managed.”

#4 – Infectious Diseases- Kennel Cough, Canine Distemper, and other airborne infectious causes of pneumonia can certainly cause coughing and must be treated.” Parasites affecting the intestinal tract, like roundworms, can trigger coughing when the parasites migrate up the intestine and into the respiratory tract. Heartworms can also trigger coughing, as immature heartworm parasites migrate into the lungs, causing irritation as they develop and mature.”

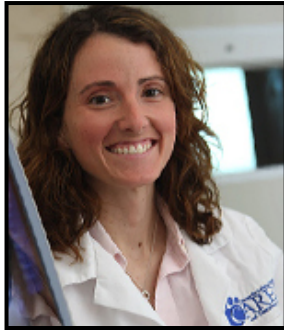
#5 – Cancer – Cancer involving any part of the airway can cause irritation, inflammation and coughing.

Treating Coughing Dogs

“The method of treatment for a coughing dog is determined, first, by diagnosing the underlying cause. Taking x-rays of the dog’s chest is the best way to “picture” what is going on in the lungs”, she says. “We look for an enlarged heart and any abnormalities of the lungs and chest.”

“The good news is, in most cases, there is always something that can be done to treat a

cough." From diuretics used to treat heart failure, antibiotics used to treat infectious causes, to cough suppressants used for collapsing trachea, there are many options for therapy. Dr King's best advice to pet parents is to keep up with routine vet care. "it is so important," she says. "Early diagnosis and preventative medicine can, not only save pet owners money by avoiding unnecessary vet bills later, but also saves lives."



About Dr. Megan King, VMD, ACVIM

Dr. Megan King received her Bachelor of Science from Pennsylvania State University in 1997. She went on to obtain her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine (VMD) from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in 2003. She completed a Rotating Medical-Surgical Internship at Red Bank Veterinary Hospital from 2003 to 2004 and a Cardiology Residency there from 2004 to 2006. She is Board Certified in her field. Dr. King has been on CARES' full-time cardiology staff since 2006. She is married with two sons and two Australian Shepherds.

The media is invited to visit Dr. King at CARES for diagnosis and treatment of actual cases. Media inquiries please contact Julie Robbins (813) 412-3342 or Julie@FetchingCommunications.com.

About CARES:

CARES is a full service specialty referral, emergency and critical care veterinary hospital. Specialty cases are seen by referral from the primary care veterinarian. Specialty services include: Cardiology, Clinical Pathology, Internal Medicine, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Radiology, Surgery and Client Support. The hospital also offers 24 hour emergency care. CARES has been voted 2008 Neighbors' Choice Award Winner for Best Veterinarian/Animal Hospital in Bucks County. For more information, visit www.vetcares.com