

# Canine caretakers warn of dog cough outbreak in area day cares, kennels

BY NICK MCCREA  
OF THE NEWS STAFF

BANGOR -- Bangor-area veterinarians, kennels, pet groomers and doggie day cares are cautioning dog owners about a strain of canine cough that appears to be spreading and affecting even some dogs that have received immunizations.

Canine infectious respiratory disease complex, also called canine cough or kennel cough, can be caused by many different strains of bacteria and virus. It can cause a number of symptoms, including coughing that can sound like a dog os “honking” like a goose, sneezing, reverse sneezing (which can sound like snorting), or gagging on mucus, according to Mark Hanks, veterinarian at Kindred Spirits Veterinary Clinic in Orrington.

The illness isn’t usually dangerous, but is highly contagious and is similar to a respiratory infection in humans.

Hanks said Thursday this is one of largest outbreaks of canine cough he’s seen in 20 years practicing in Maine. He said he’s treated or heard from area kennels about 25 to 30 total cases during the past two weeks or so.

Many dogs, including most who are admitted to kennels or dog day cares, receive a number of immunizations against the most prevalent canine-cough-causing bacteria -- Bordetella bronchiseptica. The cough that is spreading this year, however, appears to be caused by a different strain.

Hanks has sent away

cultures from dogs, which found their sickness was caused by a parainfluenza virus.

Canine cough can be harder on senior dogs and puppies. It also can have more serious effect on brachycephalic breeds -- dogs with short snouts, such as pugs, bulldogs and Boston terriers -- because they’re naturally more prone to respiratory problems.

“It’s not particularly dangerous,” Hanks said, but veterinarians and owners of businesses that deal with a lot of different dogs are cautioning owners anyway, because the illness can spread quickly and is very contagious.

Don Hanson, co-owner of Green Acres Kennel Shop in Bangor, said his business is trying to spread the word about the recent spread of canine cough, notifying customers and posting to Green Acres’ Facebook page. He also is taking steps to make sure as few of his canine clients as possible come down with the sickness.

“We are watching dogs that develop it and keeping them segregated from other dogs as much as we can,” Hanson said, adding that the business is continuing a thorough cleaning regimen to make sure all germs are wiped out.

“Be aware that it’s out there, and watch your dog for symptoms,” Hanson urged.

John Bott, spokesman for the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, which monitors animal health across the state, said Thursday the

department was not aware of any outbreaks.

Bott said that vets and kennels aren’t required to report cases of parainfluenza and that officials there typically catch wind of an illness during everyday conversations with vets and shelter operators.

Given that news of this round of canine cough hadn’t reached the state, it appears the spread could be limited to the Bangor area, Bott noted.

“This is something that all shelters should take very seriously,” Bott said, adding that a kennel or shelter with a serious outbreak could have to close down temporarily to prevent further illness.

Hanks said dogs usually recover within a week or two, and he expects the outbreak to quiet down within a month or two. In the meantime, be sure to be aware of other dogs if you choose to take your dog to a dog park or kennel, and if you are concerned, consult your veterinarian about best practices to ensure your dog does not get sick.

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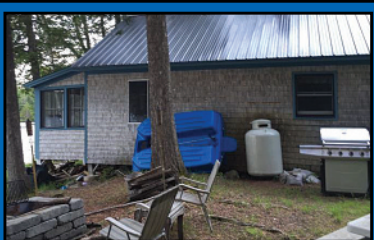
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