

Coughing Puppy May Have Kennel Cough

Avoid vigorous exercise and leash pulling to help break the cough cycle in a puppy.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My 2-month-old Jack Russell Terrier has been coughing today, and it looks like he's gagging. He has an appointment with the vet on Saturday morning, but we can we do until then?

A. Your Jack Russell probably has a case of kennel cough, or infectious tracheobronchitis. If you can break the cough cycle, the cough could get better on its own. Every time the dog coughs, the trachea (airway) becomes more irritated, which causes more coughing.

As a dog owner, you can do several things to help break the cycle. First, avoid the neck constriction that occurs when your dog pulls on the leash. This tends to irritate the trachea further. Use a nose halter or shoulder harness instead. Secondly, avoid vigorous exercise and excitement because these also tend to stimulate coughing.

If the cough is persistent, or worsening, definitely visit your veterinarian. In some cases, depending on what area of the country you live in, kennel cough can develop into the much more serious canine influenza. This condition, although rarely fatal, usually requires hospitalization, IV fluids and IV antibiotics.