

Pneumonia in Dogs

Pneumonia is a serious infection and often takes several weeks to months for a full recovery.

The most common causes or types of pneumonia:

- **Viral Pneumonia** (usually the result of canine distemper virus infection or a complicated feline upper respiratory infection).
- **Bacterial Pneumonia** (often secondary to severe kennel cough or other upper respiratory infection, aspiration, or secondary to either of the above causes.)

In most cases of pneumonia there is a bacterial component. This means that no matter what started the pneumonia, bacteria have joined in adding their own special pus, fever, and potential for disaster; in most cases, management of the bacteria is vital.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include coughing (may sound wet or crackly), nasal discharge, fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, difficulty/labored breathing. Some or all of these symptoms may be present. Coughing is a hallmark symptom.

Treatment

Treatment will always include antibiotics, sometimes multiple types of antibiotics.

Nebulization

Nebulization is similar to vaporization and involves a piece of equipment called a nebulizer. The nebulizer creates a mist of fine fluid droplets which can be combined with antibiotics or airway dilators. Unlike vaporized droplets, though, these droplets are small enough to penetrate down into the lung. (Vaporizers make larger droplets which mostly penetrate to the sinuses only. They are used to moisten upper airway secretions while nebulizers moisten lower airway secretions). Nebulized saline or water may carry antibiotics with it thus providing an additional source of moisture and antibiotic for the sick lung thus deeply treating the infection.

Physical Therapy

A technique called coupage is helpful at mobilizing respiratory secretions. Cup your hand and gently but rapidly taps the patient's chest wall repeatedly. This loosens some of the deeper secretions and helps them move into airways. Material in the airway generates coughing which removes these materials from the body. Coupage should be performed at least four times daily and should be continued at home as long as the patient has a cough. Coupage after each nebulizer treatment.

Home Care

The following tips are recommended as long as the patient is coughing:

- Do not allow prolonged exposure to extreme cold or wet weather. Keep your pet primarily indoors.
- Nebulize for at least 10 to 15 minute intervals a couple of times daily. You cannot nebulize too much. With severe pneumonia, it is recommended to nebulize as much as possible. If you are nebulizing the patient in a covered crate, check to make sure it does not get too hot

inside the crate.

- Perform coughage at least 4 times daily and allow light exercise to promote the cough.
- Do not try to suppress the cough with over-the-counter cough suppressants. We want the infected material in the chest to be coughed up.
- Use the antibiotics as directed. Expect several weeks and sometimes months for full recovery. **DO NOT DISCONTINUE ANY MEDICATIONS WITHOUT A CHECK UP. MISSING EVEN ONE DAY OF ANTIBIOTICS CAN LEAD TO DEATH OR PERMANENT DAMAGE.**