

Coughing after exercise

There would barely be a week that goes by that I do not get a trainer wanting their dog to get antibiotic treatment because their greyhound is coughing after a trial or race. While a proportion of these could have kennel cough and it may be indicated to use antibiotics, in my experience kennel cough typically occurs as outbreaks commonly at the change of seasons and isolated cases are not that common.

The vast majority of coughing dogs usually have what I call a 'sports' cough or a stress cough. I liken it to humans getting an asthmatic cough. It is not uncommon to see athletes after extreme exertion requiring their asthma puffer to help them breathe easier. In the case of a dog that is coughing post-race it could be for a number of reasons.

As already mentioned it could be the start of "kennel cough", however, it could also be from constriction of the airways, like asthma in people, which can happen in cold weather or extreme hot weather, an irritation such as the inhalation of dust or such as occurs in horses, where blood vessels actually rupture causing some bleeding into the lung (bleeders).

Dogs will typically be more prone to coughing after a run when they are young and still developing their race fitness, or if they have had a short break and it is their first run for a while.

My advice is to be aware of other possible causes before you panic and think your dog has kennel cough. Sure, be vigilant if there is a kennel cough outbreak and seek veterinary attention, however if it is an isolated case of coughing be aware of the alternatives. The use of broncho-dilators (agents that help open up the airways) may be useful. There are drugs that are very effective such as Clenbuterol and human asthmatic drugs, however these are not permitted in racing.

I have successfully used our Aushound® Herbalgic for this condition as it contains a potent form of Ginger that helps open up the airways and is not restricted for racing. I have also found it can help dry up the ropey saliva or phlegm that occurs in the back of dogs throats.