

# When to stay home?

Sometimes it's good to stay home. You just spent \$30 -\$40 in entry fees, not to mention the value of your personal time spent preparing your dog for the shows. Now you aren't so sure your pup feels right. They don't have a fever but aren't quite themselves. Your instinct is kicking in saying maybe I should go but I think it will be ok. If you ever have that hesitation or feeling, then you should listen to it.

Any time you have a gathering of animals you are presented with a possible risk of sharing illness, from mild to serious. It is no different than when kids go to school. They share everything. Well it is no different with our dogs.

When you bring a dog that is ill to the dog show you are contributing to the spread of whatever it is they have. There are no majors, points or wins that are that important. Having been on show committees I have been dismayed at times when I have a sick dog in the middle of a venue and get asked to simply move that dog to another part of the building so as not to break the major. The fellow exhibitors just didn't want it in the middle of their dogs. Instead they should have told the person to go home.

Usually, we are dealing with this conversation mid-winter or during the height of summer when we are all indoors. However, if a sick animal is brought to the show and then shown, that is just as bad. The judge, even if they don't examine the mouth, is going to touch your dog and then others. No matter how careful that judge is even using sanitizer they can't help but contribute to the spread of germs or contagious bacteria.

The most common illness shared this way is kennel cough. Unfortunately, the inoculation does not cover all varieties and it mutates. However, most vets agree some form of vaccine is better than none. It is up to you how you choose to protect your dog but remember it is also up to you to stay home if your dog is showing any symptoms. Sometimes no matter how careful we are there can be a dog that is a carrier and is not affected. If something is going around there really isn't much you are going to be able to do to avoid it and blaming everyone around you doesn't work. If you do know someone has a sick dog present than ask them not to show it. Ask them to have it seen by the show vet. Maybe some preventive measures can be taken that can help all around. If there are none that are actively sick then there really isn't much you can do other than practice good hygiene procedures on your equipment, crates and ex-pens. Bleach is always our friend. It's easy enough these days to carry spray cleaners with bleach.

It is hard when we do get something after going to the shows. Unfortunately it can be that someone didn't even know their dog was affected if they are asymptomatic. It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Instead, talk with your vet and see what proactive steps you can take to minimize risk. Some believe additional vaccinations might help while others may feel boosting the immune system works. Remember the dogs that will most probably be most susceptible will be those that haven't really gone out in the world. While seasoned veterans will be much more exposed it is probably that they have a much higher natural immunity.

Consider carrying a first aid/med kit for your dog. It doesn't have to elaborate. I carried bandages, Benadryl in case of an allergic reaction both topical and oral, triple antibiotic, enteric coated aspirin, alcohol and peroxide. You can discuss with your vet about carrying a basic antibiotic, diarrhea medication such as metronidazole, cough syrup just in case to help soothe a dog as you drive home or anything else they might recommend as a temporary fix.

At the end of the day if you think your dog isn't feeling well then do everyone a favor and stay home from that show. There will be more shows. There is no reason to risk the health of your pet and others. Nothing is worse than to be on the road and away from your own vet and have to deal with an illness.

Kathleen J. Ferris

kajalene@verizon.net

This article first appeared in the Aug 2016 AKC Gazette and is reprinted here with permission. To read or download the online Gazette, visit [www.akc.org/pubs](http://www.akc.org/pubs).