

Traditional Chinese Medicine for Pets

Vaccination Information



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Vaccination

Vaccination may be part of your pet's preventive health care plan; it can protect your pet from acquiring a potentially life threatening infectious disease. However, over-vaccinating can also pose significant health risks, including over-stimulation of the immune system resulting in allergies, recurrent skin and ear infections, immune mediated diseases (such as thrombocytopenia or hemolytic anemia), as well as certain kinds of cancer.

"What to vaccinate for" and "how often to vaccinate" remains a controversial topic amongst veterinarians. Many veterinarians are now changing their protocols based upon clinical studies that show that many vaccines that were once given annually actually provide protection for a much longer period of time. Pharmaceutical companies are now making vaccines that are licensed and labeled for 3 year duration of immunity.

Annual revaccination is not required by law in Ontario, however compulsory rabies vaccination is governed by Ontario Regulation 567/90, which requires all cat or dog owners to ensure that their pets are immunized against rabies.

Although vaccination for rabies may be compulsory, there is no requirement for annual revaccination. Under provincial legislation, a pet is considered vaccinated against rabies if the time that has elapsed since the vaccination was given is less than the duration of immunity as set out on the vaccine's label.

To reduce the health risks of vaccinations I suggest:

- Regular physical examinations (at least once a year) to optimize health and maintain balance.
- Supporting your pet's immune system using nutrition, acupuncture and herbs.
- Individualized vaccine protocols based upon your pet's risk of exposure, age, lifestyle, and health.
- Checking antibody* levels (titres) annually and only vaccinating when levels are low.
- Using thimerisol (mercury) free vaccines wherever possible.
- Using adjuvant free vaccines in cats to reduce the risk of vaccine-associated sarcomas (cancer).
- Using 3 year labeled vaccines when available.
- Puppy and kitten core vaccines given at about 12 weeks of age, boosted 3-4 weeks later, and again 1 year later.
- Vaccinating for rabies is the law and is given every 3 years where possible, unless the pet has had a documented vaccine reaction.

- Lyme, leptospirosis, bordatella, and feline leukemia vaccines are given on an individualized basis dependent upon specific risk criteria (indoor versus outdoor; family pet versus show pet; travel plans, daycare/kenneling, etc)
- Vaccination for FIV is not indicated at this point in time as the vaccine is only partially effective, and there is no test that differentiates a vaccinated cat from an infected cat. Vaccination may increase the euthanasia rate of stray/homeless cats at shelters due to positive FIV tests in vaccinated cats.
- Avoid vaccinating pets when they are sick, as this could result in worsening of their current condition by creating more stress on an already burdened immune system. In addition, certain antibiotics inactivate Bordatella vaccine, making it ineffective.
- Canine corona virus vaccine is not indicated at this time because studies show that many dogs that are exposed to the virus do not develop any evidence of disease (enteritis, diarrhea), and many infected animals have very mild clinical signs that are self-limiting and resolve on their own.

*Antibodies are immune proteins that neutralize specific foreign materials such as viruses or bacteria in the body. They form part of what is called the “Humoral” or “Memory” immune system response. The body retains a “memory” of prior exposure to foreign material so it can quickly neutralize it at future exposures. There are 2 other components to the body’s immune response, called the “Cellular” and “Mucosal” systems. Unfortunately, tests of the latter two systems are not available at present.

My vaccine protocols are based upon the individual pet’s risks and comprehensive integrated examination findings, the American Animal Hospital Association’s 2006 Canine Vaccine Guidelines, and the 2000 Report of the American Association of Feline Practitioners and Academy of Feline Medicine Advisory Panel on Feline Vaccinations. For more information visit

http://www.aahanet.org/About_aaha/About_Guidelines_Canine06.html

<http://www.aafponline.org/resources/guidelines/vaccine.pdf>

<http://www.aafponline.org/resources/statements/felovax.htm>

Vaccine Titres

Recent studies have shown that most core vaccinations last longer than one year. One study found adequate serum antibody titres to last for at least 6 years for feline panleukopenia virus, 4 years for feline calicivirus, and 3 years for feline herpesvirus. Many veterinarians are now adjusting their vaccination protocols and determining the frequency of vaccination based upon each individual patient. When determining the frequency of vaccination, several things must be taken into consideration:

- Medical history and presence of disease or active allergies
- Antibody titres
- The age of the animal
- Prior adverse reaction to vaccination
- Potential for exposure to the disease
- Prior vaccination schedule

Titres are tests that determine the amount of antibodies to a particular agent in the blood (i.e. a virus such as parvovirus). This information helps to determine an animal's immune response upon exposure to the agent, and is used to help decide whether revaccination is required. Titres do not distinguish between immunity generated by vaccination and exposure to the “wild” disease; generally the magnitude of immunity produced by vaccination is lower. An adequate titre is only a measurable quantity of the immune system’s “Memory” response. Neither vaccination nor an adequate titre guarantees protection, which is why it is essential to ensure proper function of the immune system.

Benefits of Checking Titres:

- May reduce the frequency of vaccination
- Reduces the risk of allergies, cancer, and other immune mediated diseases
- Reduces the risk of an anaphylactic reaction associated with vaccination
- Reduces exposure to toxic chemicals and foreign proteins that are found in some vaccines

Canine Titres Include:

- Distemper Virus
- Parvo Virus
- Corona Virus
- Rabies virus

Feline Titres Include:

- Panleukopenia Virus
- Calici Virus
- Herpes Virus
- Rabies Virus