Vaccinations



Vaccinations

What is a vaccination?

A vaccination is a way of preventing what would otherwise be deadly and potentially incurable disease. Most vaccinations take the form of an injection. They work by stimulating the immune system so that it is able to handle these diseases easily if they are encountered (establishing immunity). An animal that has not been vaccinated would be unlikely to have an immunity to these diseases should they be encountered.

What diseases can pets get that are prevented by

vaccination?

There are a number of potentially deadly diseases that we can now protect pets against by vaccination. These include:

For Cats:

1. Cat Flu: This disease is caused by 2 viruses (Feline Herpes virus and Feline Calicivirus), both of which can stay with the cat for life. Signs of cat flu can include: conjunctivitis – ranging from mild (eyes slightly red with watery discharge) to severe (very red eyes with large amount of pus production), nasal discharge and sneezing as well as oral ulcers. In severe cases of cat flu, cats may stop eating due to the severity of the disease.
2. Parvovirus: The disease caused by Feline Parvovirus has a high mortality rate (i.e. the majority of cats that get this disease will die). The virus works by attacking the immune system as well as the intestines. Infected cats stop eating, start vomiting, can become very pale and have a low white cell count (and an ineffective immune system). Death can result very soon after infection (within a few days). This virus is very hardy and can persist for a long time in the environment. Apparently healthy cats may also be carriers for the virus.
3. Chlamydophilus: This bacterial disease causes conjunctivitis (eye infection) in cats.

For Dogs:

1. Parvovirus: As with cats, this disease has a high mortality rate (where a large majority of dogs that get this disease die despite treatment). After infection, the virus attacks the lining of the intestines, causing bloody diarrhoea as well as vomiting. Death can result in a few days after infection, often due to dehydration and shock. As with the feline (cat) version of the disease, this virus can persist for a long time in the environment and can go on to infect puppies and dogs that are not up to date with their vaccinations.
2. Canine Infectious Hepatitis (Adenovirus): Yet another virus with a high mortality rate, this virus attacks the liver and causes necrosis (death) of liver cells. Severe internal bleeding can result after infection due to a lack of clotting factors produced by the liver. Puppies and dogs that develop the disease can die rapidly after infection. This virus can also live for quite a long time in the environment.
3. Canine Distemper: The Canine Distemper virus causes a disease of multiple organ systems at the one time, including the eyes (resulting in extremely red eyes with greenish discharge), the lungs (pneumonia), skin (skin lesions and/or increased thickness of paw pads) and the brain (encephalitis or inflammation of the brain). This disease also carries a high mortality rate.
4. Parainfluenza: Severe infection with the Parainfluenza virus can cause bronchopneumonia (lung infection). The parainfluenza virus is considered part of a complex of viruses and bacteria that cause “kennel cough”.
5. Leptospirosis: This disease is caused by a bacteria found in fluids of infected animals. The disease can cause severe irreversible kidney and liver damage as well as death. This disease can also be transmitted to humans (Weil’s Disease) and infected dogs can be a potential source of bacterial excretion.

My pet never goes out, why do I have to vaccinate my pet?

Often, UNVACCINATED pets are infected when they are taken outdoors by their owner or if they slip outdoors without their owner's knowledge. A large number of the viruses that can be prevented by vaccination survive for a long time in the environment (even in direct sunlight, wind and rain) and it only takes a few seconds of contact before an infection is set up in an unvaccinated animal.

Almost all of the disease covered by the vaccinations are deadly and cannot be treated apart from supportive care (which is why vaccines were developed for them in the first place). It is better to vaccinate your pet for his/her own protection even though he/she may not leave the house often.

How do I get my pet up to date with vaccinations?

• For puppies and kittens under 16 weeks of age: our clinic recommends a series of at least 3 vaccinations carried out once every 4 weeks from the time the puppy/kitten is 6 – 8 weeks old, until the puppy/kitten is 16 weeks old. Annual vaccinations should be carried out after this initial round of puppy/kitten vaccines.

• For dogs/cats more than 16 weeks old THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN VACCINATED PREVIOUSLY: our clinic recommends 2 vaccinations (given 4 weeks apart), then annual vaccinations thereafter.

• For dogs/cats more than 16 weeks old THAT HAD BEEN VACCINATED AS PUPPIES/KITTENS: our clinic recommends annual vaccinations.

The above are general recommendations. Please consult the veterinarian for specific vaccination recommendations tailored to your dog/cat's requirements.

Are there any side-effects associated with vaccinations?

Yes, side-effects may occur with vaccinations. The most common side effect encountered with vaccination is that of lethargy with or without a fever. This side-effect can occur 30 – 60 minutes after the vaccination and occurs in approximately 0.51% of cats and 0.38% of dogs receiving a vaccination. Pain and localized swelling at the injection site and a decreased appetite may also develop in the next 1 – 2 days following a vaccination.

Rarely, there may be other more severe side effects. These range from rash development, facial swelling, protracted vomiting, difficulty breathing, shock and anaphylaxis. IF YOUR PET DEVELOPS ANY OF THESE SIGNS FOLLOWING A VACCINATION, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY.

In cats, vaccine associated sarcomas (a type of soft tissue cancer) have been known to occur with these tumours developing in sites of previous vaccinations. The development of such tumours are extremely rare (0.003%).

At The Animal Doctors, we firmly believe that vaccinations save lives and that the value of vaccinations in protecting pets against deadly diseases FAR OUTWEIGH the potential risks of vaccination.

PLEASE BE RESPONSIBLE: VACCINATE YOUR PET.

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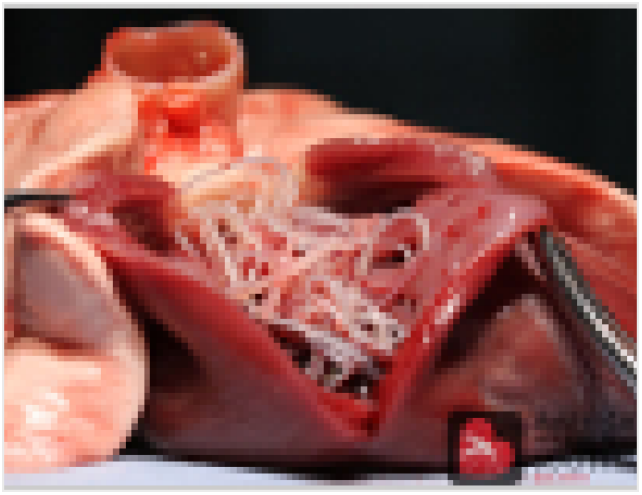
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