

Q & A - Pet Vaccinations

Are vaccinations really necessary?

Yes. Vaccinations help protect your pet from a number of potentially serious and even fatal diseases, such as Rabies. Not only that, vaccinations cost considerably less than the treatments available for the diseases pets are normally vaccinated against. Every pet should be vaccinated - even indoor dogs and cats can be exposed to a rabid bat.

How do vaccinations work?

Vaccines contain viruses or bacteria that have been modified so that they will not cause disease. When an animal is vaccinated, it stimulates two parts of the animal's immune system. One is the production of antibodies, the other is the stimulation of cell mediated immunity, which, in combination, mount a response against the bacteria or virus in question. If the dog or cat is later exposed to that disease, the two parts of the immune system will react quickly to destroy the disease-causing agent.

Why does my pet need regular booster vaccinations for the same disease?

The protection provided by a vaccine gradually declines over time. Your pet needs regular "booster" vaccinations to ensure ongoing immunity from disease.

Do I need to get my pet vaccinated every year?

This is a topic which is currently under investigation within veterinary medicine. Unfortunately, the duration of immunity for each vaccine is not currently known.

While pet owners can have blood tests done on their pets to assess the pet's antibody level, this does not test the level of immunity currently provided by the pet's cell mediated immune system. Until more is known about the duration of immunity, the frequency and type of vaccines administered will vary. Talk to your veterinarian about the risk of viral and bacterial diseases in your area, and the need for one, two or three year vaccines.

What diseases are vaccines available for?

Vaccines available for cats include:

- Rabies
- Rhinotracheitis (Herpesvirus)
- Calicivirus
- Chlamydophila felis*
- Panleukopenia
- Feline Leukemia

Reference: Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA)

