

Vaccines. Friend or Foe ?



by Donna of **Your Pet Pals**

As people who understand the value of the lives of our pets, we take the responsibility of making decisions regarding aspects of their care very seriously. Let's face it....they are at our mercy with respect to all aspects of their lives.....their safety and well-being, their food, their exercise, their health.

Part of our responsibility includes the very controversial topic of vaccinations.

In the course of day to day life, our pets may come into contact with potentially fatal infectious diseases in a wide variety of ways. None of us want to lose our pets or to see them suffer in this way. The solution of course is to ensure that your pets receive the necessary vaccinations under the guidance of your chosen veterinarian.

Good....problem solved!

Or is it?

Many pet guardians are wary of vaccines due to the reports of side effects that in some cases lead to both short and long term problems and occasionally worse. What was once thought to be a harmless, simple procedure is now approached with caution by both pet guardians and diligent caring veterinarians alike.

So....what approach do we take to vaccines to be “safe “ from diseases and “safe “ from vaccines ?

Firstly, I believe the only person to advise us on vaccines is the member of our pets' wellness team that has the greatest and most up to date science and experience based knowledgethat is your veterinarian. Many others have opinions on this topic but truthfully, that is all they areopinions.

In talking to many pet people in the course of my daily activities I have come to realize this. There appears to be as many different approaches to vaccination as there are veterinarians. Some appear to be much more interested in customizing your pets' vaccinations to the risks of each individual pet than others.

Firstly, make sure you have a veterinarian that you can freely talk to. One who will take the time to discuss the vaccination needs of your pets and who understands and shares your concerns. **You can discuss vaccination protocols for your pets based on:**

- **your pets activities,**
- **the incidence of various diseases in your area**
- **the known effectiveness and safety of the individual vaccine**
- **your pets age and health**
- **legal requirements**

There are some other alternatives to some vaccinations that you can explore.

Some cautious, holistically minded pet guardians will find a veterinarian who will do a simple blood test to check “ **antibody titer** “. This allows your veterinarian and their lab to look at the level of protection your pet has to specific diseases before determining the need to vaccinate. It can be a great tool to help us avoid over vaccination and low immunity. The tests are simple and not overly expensive (please discuss the cost with your respective veterinarian). However, like everything these tests are not fool proof. A low titre seemingly does not necessarily mean that your pet is not protected. A high titre does not give you a 100% guarantee that your pet is covered. However, keep the reality.....nothing is 100% ! You always have to weigh the pro's and con's. This test certainly helps you and your veterinarian make some informed decisions around vaccination.

You can also address vaccination protocols through homeopathic remedies known as “ nosodes “.

Please note that not all veterinarians offer titre tests and homeopathic service. If your regular veterinarian does not ask for the name of one that does or, do your own homework, you will find the veterinarian in your area that recognizes the importance of these services.

If you determine your pet requires vaccines, you may discuss with your veterinarian splitting the vaccines up and vaccinating only for a single disease at a time. We have taken this approach with our pets over the years and it has proven to be a good one.

At the end of the day it is all about choosing your pets' veterinarian carefully and ensuring that you participate in determining the right path of both preventative and curative care for your pet. I can tell you that we have had the same primary care veterinarian for our pets for around 15 years. She has never disappointed us in her approach. She has consistently advised us and helped us to make decisions that have always put our pet's well-being, safety, comfort and happiness first.

Not so long ago I stumbled across a comment regarding vaccinations that was made by a **Dr. Arnold Plotnick DVM** who is the VP of Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital in New York City. He captured a philosophical approach to vaccinations that made sense to me. He wrote “ *We should regard vaccinations in the same way we regard anesthesia; generally safe, with adverse reactions and side effects being relatively uncommon. Both should be performed only when there is a valid indication* “.

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