



To the Editor

Response to The Deadly Canine Parvovirus - Is Your Dog At Risk?

The article 'The Deadly Canine Parvovirus - Is Your Dog At Risk?' (Dogs NSW, Sept 2013) promotes annual revaccination for parvovirus and fails to address the controversy about over-vaccination of pets, which exploits companion animals and their owners.

Over-vaccination of pets was raised by the consumer watchdog CHOICE in 2010 with the article: Pet vaccination: Over-vaccinating your pet could be harmful to their health as well as your own hip pocket. In July 2013 the Sydney Morning Herald reported on another CHOICE investigation which found "the three common areas for upselling by vets were unnecessary diagnostic tests, over-vaccinating and mark-ups on products sold by vets".

Many vets are failing to advise pet owners about vaccination best practice, and failing to obtain informed consent before vaccinating their clients' pets.

This article maintains the lack of information by failing to refer to the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats (2010), which advise that after effective vaccination with the core vaccines for parvovirus, distemper virus and adenovirus, duration of immunity "is many years and may be up to the lifetime of the pet". The WSAVA Guidelines also warn "we should aim to reduce the 'vaccine load' on individual animals in order to minimise the potential for adverse reactions to vaccine products".

This article does not discuss the option of in-surgery or lab-based titre testing to verify a response to core

vaccination. The WSAVA Guidelines 2010 note "the principles of 'evidence-based veterinary medicine' would dictate that testing for antibody status (for either pups or adult dogs) is a better practice than simply administering a vaccine booster on the basis that this should be 'safe and cost less'". The latest WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines for New Puppy Owners (published in May 2013) advise, "the presence of circulating antibodies indicates that the dog is immune, and revaccination (with core vaccines) is not required".

Similarly there is no discussion about the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's (APVMA) Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats (first published in January 2010 in response to pet owners' concerns about over-vaccination) which states "...the aim should be to ensure that all susceptible animals are vaccinated, rather than that already well-immunised animals are re-vaccinated".

The APVMA is the government regulator of veterinary vaccine products. In September 2010 the APVMA requested all eight Veterinary Boards in Australia circulate its Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats to veterinarians in their jurisdictions. It is my understanding that some, if not all, of the Veterinary Boards, ignored this request by the government regulator, an appalling dereliction of duty. As a result many pet owners still remain unaware of the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats.

The APVMA's past failure to ensure that vaccine manufacturers' revaccination recommendations are evidence based is at the heart of the continuing problem of over-vaccination



of pets, coupled with the reluctance of many members of the veterinary profession to keep abreast of and acknowledge the latest science on duration of immunity and vaccination best practice. No wonder the World Small Animal Veterinary Association warns, "there is an urgent requirement for education of practicing veterinarians in this area".

The APVMA's Position Statement notes: "The APVMA does not support the retention of label statements that direct or imply a universal need for life-long annual revaccinations with core vaccines...The APVMA is working with vaccine registrants with a view to updating labels". However, more than three years after publication of the APVMA's Position Statement, core vaccine products with an annual revaccination 'recommendation' remain



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on the market, e.g. Virbac's Canigen DHA2P and Boehringer Ingelheim's Protech C3.

Another important omission in the article is discussion about appropriate timing of puppy vaccination, with some vaccine product labels recommending a finish at 10 or 12 weeks, which is in conflict with the WSAVA recommendation for a finish around 14-16 weeks. It is possible that, due to the interference of maternally derived antibodies, some puppies may remain unimmunised and unprotected with the earlier finish.

Mainly the article fails to include a simple and effective message to promote successful immunisation of puppies to protect against parvovirus, rather than over-vaccinating already immune dogs over and over again. Instead we are presented with a fear-mongering

advertorial promoting lucrative over-vaccination of dogs on behalf of the veterinary vaccination industry.

Readers of Dogs NSW have been poorly served by this article. As a result it is likely many already immunised dogs will be unnecessarily revaccinated.

I request that Dogs NSW take steps to redress the misinformation it has spread in the community.

Sincerely
Elizabeth Hart

Bushfire evacuation

We would like to express our appreciation to Dogs NSW for allowing us to evacuate to the grounds at Orchard Hills on 23 October 2013, which was the day the bushfire authorities were expecting all hell to

break loose. Thank goodness it did not eventuate.

We made the decision to evacuate the night before and arrived at the complex at 11pm. It was very reassuring to be met on arrival by a familiar face in Steve Hadfield the groundsman, who was most helpful. It is very hard to know what the best solution is when you have a caravan and numerous dogs.

As it turned out we were personally not at risk and were able to return safely that evening.

We are most grateful that Dogs NSW could offer its members the use of the facilities in these very trying times.

Yours faithfully,
Ken and Trudy Dive