

AN UPDATE ON WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT CANINE AND FELINE VACCINATION PROGRAMS

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A significant number of [veterinary] practitioners believe:

1) the annual revaccination recommendation on the vaccine label is evidence the product provides

immunity for (only) one year. Not true. Some vaccines provide a life-time or many years of immunity, whereas others probably provide less than a year of immunity if at all.

2) that they are legally required to vaccinate annually and if they don't they will not be covered by AVMA

liability insurance if the animal develops a vaccine preventable disease - Not true.

The only vaccine

required at all by law is rabies and even that vaccine is not required in some states, especially for cats.

There is also a concern that certain companies will not provide assistance if practitioners don't vaccinate

annually with core vaccines. Not true. In fact, all of the major companies have now demonstrated their

core products provide at least 3 years of immunity and endorse the not more often than 3 year vaccination

recommendation made in the AAEP Feline Guidelines and the AAHA Canine Guidelines.

3) that not revaccinating will cause the animal to become susceptible soon (days or a few weeks) after the

one year. – Not true for the core vaccines. They provide up to a lifetime of immunity or at the very least many years of immunity

4) if the animal is not revaccinated at or before one year the "whole vaccination program needs to be

started again". – Not true. If the immune response had been stimulated previously, memory cells will

persist well beyond a year for the core vaccines. Even with the non-core vaccines, if the animals was

previously vaccinated properly (eg one dose of MLV at an age when maternal antibodies did not block

the vaccine or two doses of a killed vaccine that were given 3 to 4 weeks apart, it is not necessary to do

anything other than give another dose of vaccine!

5) if they don't continue to revaccinate annually, diseases like canine distemper, canine parvovirus, feline

panleukopenia, and infectious canine hepatitis (CAV-1) will "reappear and cause widespread disease

similar to what was seen prior to the development of vaccines for these diseases.” – Not true with the core vaccines, it is not how often you revaccinate; it is dependent on how many animals in the population (herd immunity) receive at least one dose of the core vaccines at an age when MDA cannot block active immunity (eg >16 weeks of age).

6) that if the revaccination “doesn’t help, it won’t hurt.” – Not true. Vaccines can and do cause adverse reactions, thus don’t administer vaccines if and when they are not needed. Vaccines can cause severe adverse reactions, including death!

7) that giving a vaccine annually that has a duration of immunity of 3 or more years provides much better immunity than if the product is given only once during the three or more years. – Not true.

8) there are regional/state rabies programs that suggest annual rabies vaccination programs provide better protection than revaccination once every three years regardless of whether a 1 year or 3 year rabies product is used. – Not true The 3 year rabies vaccine provides equal to or better immunity than the 1 year vaccine and reduces the potential for adverse reactions from overvaccination. There is no sound immunologic reason to revaccinate for rabies more often than every 3 years and that may be less in the future (eg there is already a 4 year rabies vaccine licensed for the cat).

9) that parvovirus vaccines only provide six months of immunity, thus they must give them semi-annually and the CPV-2 vaccines need to be given with coronavirus vaccine (CCV) to prevent enteritis. Not true. Parvovirus vaccines are excellent and they provide protection against all the CPV-2 variants (2, 2a, 2b, 2c) for many years after vaccination. Furthermore, no benefit can be shown for a CCV vaccine either in reducing the severity of parvovirus enteritis or preventing enteritis.

10) “It’s much cheaper to revaccinate the pet annually than it is to treat the disease the animal will develop because it didn’t get revaccinated annually.” The “better safe than sorry” philosophy - It is less expensive to prevent disease. That is why it is necessary to use the core vaccines. However, if the core vaccines are given as a puppy and again at 6 months to a year of age, then annual revaccination is not needed. Furthermore, if a vaccine is given that is not needed and it causes an adverse reaction that is unacceptable and very expensive.

11) they need to revaccinate all new dogs/cats coming to their clinic irrespective of vaccination history even

when vaccination records are available from another clinic. Presumably the “other clinic” used the wrong vaccine or didn’t know how to vaccinate. – Not true

12) *“Dogs and cats need to be revaccinated annually up to 5 to 7 years of age, then and only then would vaccination every three years be okay.”* – Not true. Dogs and cats should be vaccinated as puppies and kittens with the core vaccines making sure the last dose of vaccine is at 14 to 16 weeks of age. They should be revaccinated again at 6 months to 1 year of age, unless titers were performed; then they need not be revaccinated more often than every 3 years. Also, they do not need to have antibody titers performed more often than every 3 years and only then if you decide not to revaccinate. Rabies vaccines by law must be given every 3 years after the initial 2 doses are given. Rabies laws requiring revaccination more often than every 3 years after the initial 2 doses should be changed!

13) *“Surgical procedures, including anesthesia, are immunosuppressive thus dogs should be vaccinated prior to or shortly after surgery.”* – Not true. Vaccines should not be given during anesthesia and animals already vaccinated prior to surgery need not be vaccinated again. If they have never been vaccinated prior to surgery, wait until the animal has recovered from anesthesia to vaccinate.

14) *“Because boarding kennels require annual or more often (kennel cough every 3 to 6 months) vaccination, practitioners must continue vaccinating annually with all vaccines.”* – Not true – help change the kennel rules through education and just use the vaccines that need to be given (eg Kennel Cough.) The kennels need to understand that dogs and cats are up-to-date on their core vaccines when they have been vaccinated within the past 5 to 7 years and no kennel should require core vaccines more often than every 3 years. It is reasonable for the kennels to require the “kennel cough” products annually.

Note: There are kennels that require every licensed vaccine and the vaccines must have been given within 1 year or less prior to admission – help change these rules! Those kennels that are members of the American Kennel Association follow the AAHA Guidelines, but many kennels do not belong to this association.

It will be necessary to correct many of these and additional misunderstandings by providing education on vaccines to some veterinary practitioners, kennel owners and pet owners before significant changes in vaccination programs can or will occur to reduce the over-vaccination of both cats and dogs.