

Pet Vaccines Simplified

A Guide for Dog Owners

Since the 1970s, we've been encouraged to vaccinate our dogs and cats every year. But scientific knowledge has moved on. New vaccine guidelines from veterinary bodies such as the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) tell us that it's harmful to give the full vaccine series every year. Your vet may not be up-to-date on current science, so here is what you need to know:

- We vaccinate dogs to protect them from distemper, parvovirus, adenovirus (also called hepatitis), kennel cough and leptospirosis. (In some countries it is also the law to vaccinate against rabies. The rabies vaccine should be given alone, and never alongside the other vaccines.)
- These are expressed in the canine combination vaccine as DHPPi + L

D is for distemper

H is for hepatitis

P is for parvovirus

Pi is for parainfluenza (kennel cough)

L is for leptospirosis

There is another vaccine for kennel cough called Bordetella. This vaccine is usually squirted up the dog's nose.

- The WSAVA has divided canine vaccines into 'core', 'non-core' and 'not recommended'.
- The core diseases are for distemper, parvovirus and adenovirus. These vaccines are now known to last up to the lifetime of the dog. Over 95% of dogs will be immune to these viruses for life from their puppy shots. There is no need to vaccinate against these diseases annually or even every three years.
- If you vaccinate, you should give the last puppy shots between 14 and 16 weeks of age to make sure the vaccine isn't inactivated by the pup's mother's milk. As stated previously, in over 95% of cases, this will provide many years' immunity, and probably lifelong immunity.
- After the puppy shot, to make sure your dog has immunity, you can measure circulating antibodies in his blood. This is called a 'titer test' (sometimes it's spelt 'titre').
- At one time, blood had to be sent away to a laboratory for testing, and it was (and still is) expensive. A new in-practice titer testing kit is now available. It's called the VacciCheck and you can arrange a discount for your vet in the UK and America by sending him a letter from the Pet Welfare Alliance. An in-house titer test should cost around the same as an annual shot. See this link: <http://www.petwelfarealliance.org/send-a-vet-letter.html>.
- VacciCheck is also available in other countries – see <http://biogal.co.il/>.
- The benefit of a titer test is that you can avoid unnecessary vaccines.
- We now know that giving dogs too many vaccines can cause serious life-threatening diseases. This includes sudden death, cancer, leukaemia, arthritis, allergies, diabetes, thrombocytopenia, autoimmune haemolytic anaemia, brain damage, behavioural

problems, skin problems, and many autoimmune diseases. See the following web link for scientific research to support this statement:

http://www.petwelfarealliance.org/uploads/3/0/3/6/3036695/vaccine_science_research.pdf

- It just doesn't make sense to vaccinate more often than is needed to protect dogs from viral disease.
- The WSAVA has designated the kennel cough and leptospirosis vaccines as 'non-core', otherwise expressed as 'optional'. These should only be given if there is a real and serious disease threat in your area.
- The leptospirosis vaccine is not very effective and is the one most associated with serious adverse reactions, including brain damage and death. See this web link for further information: http://www.petwelfarealliance.org/uploads/3/0/3/6/3036695/lepto_-_patricia_jordan_3_41_in_pdf.pdf
- Because leptospirosis vaccines give only short-term immunity (of between 3 and 9 months), many vets advocate annual boosting for leptospirosis. You need to be sure that there is a real disease threat in your area. Ask your vet how many cases he has seen in the last six months before risking this vaccine.
- Leptospirosis is a range of bacterins. Natural anti-bacterials which may also prevent infection, include garlic, olive leaf extract, vitamin A, grapefruitseed extract and Transfer Factor (concentrated colostrum). There is also a homoeopathic leptospirosis 'nosode'. Trials in Brazil showed the nosode to be effective.
- Kennel cough vaccines are also thought to be particularly ineffective. They can give your dog a 'mild' case of kennel cough. He can then spread kennel cough to other dogs. The official datasheets also warn 'immunocompromised' (sick) humans to avoid contact with their vaccinated dog for up to seven weeks after they've been vaccinated. This is because Bordetella is closely related to whooping cough and a vaccinated dog can in rare cases infect humans.
- Kennel cough is similar to bronchitis in humans. It is rarely life-threatening and most dogs recover without treatment. Yet dogs can have serious adverse reactions to the vaccine - as stated previously. If your dog gets kennel cough, keep him quiet and comfortable. There are a range of natural remedies, including the homoeopathic kennel cough nosode, Transfer Factor, vitamin C, raw garlic, and olive leaf extract. Natural honey will help ease his throat. It should resolve within three weeks but, in rare cases, can escalate to pneumonia. If he hasn't recovered within a few weeks, consult your vet.

In summary:

There is no need to keep vaccinating your dogs against distemper, parvovirus or adenovirus. If in doubt, ask for a titer test instead.

The non-core vaccines for kennel cough and leptospirosis are not effective and come with documented side-effects. Only use these vaccines after considering the risks and benefits.