

Dear Sir or Madam,

Veterinary groups around the world have introduced new vaccination schedules in response to duration of immunity studies and concerns over vaccine safety. The Pet Welfare Alliance supports these guidelines and welcomes a reduction in the number of vaccine antigens given to companion animals. The aim of this letter is to practically support these aims by asking you to effect change in line with the current established science and guidelines provided by those veterinary bodies.

The Pet Welfare Alliance is an alliance of pet owners and veterinarians formed as a watchdog for the pet products industry. Pet vaccination is one of the foremost areas in need of revision, and we believe that recent developments pave the way for positive change.

It is often believed that annual vaccination is a requirement to establish immunity and that it does no harm.

With the advent of updated science and guidelines by world veterinary bodies there are clear guidelines to adhere to, that dispell the myth that annual vaccination is necessary, beneficial in providing any further protection in already immune animals, or without risk of causing harm. Details of vaccine adverse reactions can be found in the WSAVA guidelines (see links below) that range from mild (fever, loss of appetite etc), to severe/life-threatening (epilepsy, arthritis, AHA, organ failure).

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association Vaccination Guidelines state:

“Core vaccines should not be given any more frequently than every three years after the 12 month booster injection following the puppy/kitten series, because the duration of immunity (DOI) is many years and may be up to the lifetime of the pet. In order to ensure the existence of duration of immunity, titer testing may be used.” Ronald D Schultz, Ph.D., Professor and Chairman, Department of Pathobiological Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin; Member of WSAVA and AAHA vaccine guideline groups

“Only one dose of the modified-live canine ‘core’ vaccine (against CDV, CAV-2 and CPV-2) or modified-live feline ‘core’ vaccine (against FPV, FCV and FHV), when administered at 16 weeks or older, will provide long lasting (many years to a lifetime) immunity in a very high percentage of animals ([Schultz, 1998], [Schultz, 2000] and [Schultz, 2006]).”

In its 2013 puppy vaccine summary, the WSAVA adds: “The WSAVA states that we should vaccinate against the core diseases no more frequently than every three years. This is often taken to mean that we should vaccinate every three years – but this is not the case. If the dog is already immune to these three core diseases, re-vaccinating will not add any extra immunity.”

The WSAVA new puppy owner guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/New%20Puppy%20Owner%20Vaccination%20Guidelines%20Updated%20July%2029%202013.pdf>

And the full guidelines at:

<http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/VaccinationGuidelines2010.pdf>

The WSAVA on non-core (optional) vaccines (2013)

Leptospirosis

“Vaccination should be restricted to use in geographical areas where a significant risk of exposure has been established or for dogs whose lifestyle places them at significant risk”

“Protection against infection with different serovars is variable. This product is associated with the greatest number of adverse reactions to any vaccine. In particular, veterinarians are advised of reports of acute anaphylaxis in toy breeds following administration of leptospirosis vaccines. Routine vaccination of toy breeds should only be considered in dogs known to have a very high risk of exposure”

Kennel Cough

“Canine respiratory disease complex (kennel cough) is not a vaccine-preventable disease”

“you should check with your kennel because some will demand kennel cough vaccines, and others will not accept dogs that have been vaccinated against kennel cough (due to shedding)”

Essentially, the kennel cough vaccine datasheets warn that vaccinated dogs can develop a mild case of kennel cough. Although said to be mild, vaccinated dogs can infect other dogs with kennel cough. Again, this vaccine is deemed optional by the WSAVA.

The WSAVA on Titer Testing

“The WSAVA supports the use of titre testing. This is where a small sample of blood is taken from the dog and checked for the presence of circulating antibodies. The presence of circulating antibodies indicates that the dog is immune, and revaccination (with core vaccines) is not required. You may decide to titre test before giving the 12 month booster, as this may show that boosting is unnecessary. New in-practice titre-testing kits are now available which will allow your veterinarian to do a titre test very quickly, without sending the blood sample to a laboratory”

The only reliable way of knowing whether a dog is immune is to ascertain whether the dog has antibodies to the core diseases. Vaccination in itself does not offer a guarantee of protection.

“A dog with active immunity to CDV/CPV-2/CAV will not develop disease regardless of its physical state! Even a puppy with MDA with a titer considered protective can not become infected/diseased. We have demonstrated that experimentally. In nature it occurs frequently in Shelters where we have severe outbreaks of CPV and/or CDV. We routinely test titers of incoming dogs. If they are adult dogs with titers we put them in with diseased dogs and they never develop disease! That is one of the advantages of the rapid on-site tests like VacciCheck, as we don't have to isolate dogs with detectable titers!!” Ronald D Schultz, Ph.D., Professor and Chairman, Department of Pathobiological Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin; Member of WSAVA and AAHA vaccine guideline groups

The UK Kennel Club on vaccination

Health and Breeder Services manager Bill Lambert said “there are a number of ways in which breeders could choose to protect or immunise their animals”

“While vaccination is a commonly used method, the KC would wish to make clear there is no blanket requirement for members of the ABS [Assured Breeder Scheme] to use conventional vaccination either annual or otherwise”

We asked Mr Lambert to incorporate the WSAVA guidelines into their policy, and at the time of writing he informs us that, “it has been decided that the wording of the advice sheet template for assured breeders will be changed. Once this has been done it will be submitted to the Dog Health Group and General Committee”. You can contact Mr Lambert with any queries about the Kennel Club guidelines on vaccination at:

Bill.Lambert@thekennelclub.org.uk

Vet Waiver

Vaccine data sheets state “not for use in an unhealthy/immune compromised animal” or similar. Vets should be able to provide a letter of waiver of the requirement to be vaccinated on the grounds of health issues to avoid adverse reactions.

The Dog World

The Pet Welfare Alliance has written to all UK veterinary practices and included details of the new in-practice VacciCheck titer test and arranged a discount for them with the supplier. Letters have been sent to local authorities, boarding establishments, breed/breed rescue clubs/societies, training clubs, breeders, charity/rescue, and pet insurers in the UK, asking them to incorporate the current scientific guidelines into their policies.

Proposal

The Pet Welfare Alliance would ask that you incorporate the WSAVA guidelines into your policy so:

- a) That annual vaccination is not a requirement
- b) That the accepted period of vaccination for core vaccines should be no more frequently than every three years, and that protection can be lifelong
- c) That proof of a titer test showing that re-vaccination is not required is acceptable in place of blind re-vaccination
- d) That the Leptospirosis and Kennel Cough non-core (optional) vaccines are not a requirement
- e) A letter from the animal owner’s vet to waive the requirement of vaccination due to health issues, is acceptable in place of blindly re-vaccinating
- f) A letter from the animal owner’s vet to waive the requirement of vaccination due to alternative methods of protection/immunisation, is acceptable in place of blind re-vaccination

This letter is now available on the Pet Welfare Alliance website (along with letters to all the other types of establishments) so that the public have access to this, with the aim of enabling long-overdue change.

Currently the WSAVA is working to educate veterinary surgeons with regard to the latest science, and many pet owners are choosing not to over-vaccinate their pets and risk vaccine adverse effects. Quite frequently the requirement to provide proof of annual vaccination is preventing pet owners from following the known science whilst protecting their pets against unnecessary suffering.

We hope very much that you will incorporate these proposals into your vaccine policy and we would be only too pleased to help if you have any questions.

We would be grateful if you are able to confirm that you have adopted these proposals into your policy as we also like to publicise and make available information on our website for the public and relevant establishments alike in order to promote good practice.

Yours sincerely



Catherine O'Driscoll
Pet Welfare Alliance