

Pet Welfare Alliance

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CALL TO REDUCE OVER-VACCINATION OF PETS

Although the World Small Animal Veterinary Association has for years tried to reduce the number of vaccines given to dogs and cats, over-vaccination is still very much the norm. In particular, owners wishing to put their pets in kennels and catteries, or attend clubs and activities, are forced to over-vaccinate. Every medical procedure comes with a risk, so it makes little sense to vaccinate an animal when the vaccine is not needed.

The problem is educational.

The Pet Welfare Alliance (part of Canine Health Concern) has this month sent thousands of letters to local authorities, kennel and cattery owners, boarding establishments, breeders, dog clubs, breed clubs, breed rescue organisations, charity/rescue, and pet insurers to inform them of:

- Potential lifetime immunity to the core viral diseases (distemper, parvovirus and hepatitis/adenovirus for dogs, and panleukopenia, calicivirus and herpesvirus-1 for cats)
- The optional nature of non-core vaccines (kennel cough and leptospirosis for dogs)
- Potential vaccine adverse effects
- The availability of inexpensive in-house titre (antibody) testing kits
- The presence of antibody for the core diseases confirms that the animal is immune and does not need revaccinating

During 2013, the Pet Welfare Alliance wrote to every veterinary practice in the UK with the above facts, plus vaccine adverse effects references. We negotiated a discount for veterinary practices against VacciCheck, the in-house titre testing kit. Titre testing can confirm immunity and mitigate vaccine booster loss. The profession has sadly been slow to respond.

It was established in 1978 that once dogs are immune to the core diseases, they are immune for years, and probably for life. This scientific fact is reflected in WSAVA vaccine guidelines (see Notes/link below). Yet most vets in the UK are advocating annual or three-yearly vaccination against diseases to which dogs and cats are already immune.

The WSAVA puppy vaccine summary clarifies with regard to vaccine frequency: "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."

Vets need to be aware that vaccinating is not the same as immunising, which is why vaccinated dogs succumb to viral and bacterial disease. Only the presence of circulating antibody can confirm immunity, and **only the absence of circulating antibody can justify revaccination.**

The Pet Welfare Alliance calls for the veterinary profession to respond to the science, and stop over-vaccinating.

Ends

Date

Notes:

1. This is a link to the WSAVA puppy vaccine summary:
http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/New%20Puppy%20Owner%20Vaccination%20Guidelines%20May%202013_0.pdf
2. The VacciCheck in-practice titre testing kit is available in the UK from Woodley Equipment Company Limited -
<http://www.woodleyequipment.com/uk-veterinary/immunology/immunocomb-vaccicheck-antibody-test-kit-464-164-.php>. Email: sales@woodleyequipment.com.
3. The Pet Welfare Alliance is the international campaigning arm of Canine Health Concern, which has the support of vets and pet owners from around the world.

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