

## VACCINATION / PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

A healthy pet is a source of pride and pleasure for you. You improve your pet's chance of living longer, being pain-free, and enjoying life to the fullest by vaccinating your pet. In the long run, keeping current with vaccinations is less expensive than treating for the diseases that have treatments.

A vaccine is a sterile biological product that stimulates the development of protective immunity to a given disease. If a vaccine protects against several diseases, it is called a multivalent vaccine. To be effective, the vaccine must be administered prior to exposure to the disease-causing organisms. To sustain continued immunity, the vaccine must be re-administered periodically. Timely revaccination, commonly called boosting, is an integral part of proper care.

### WHICH DISEASES CAN BE PREVENTED BY VACCINATION?

#### DOGS:

- **Canine distemper** is a viral disease with a death rate close to 100 percent in puppies and 75 percent in adults. Dogs surviving distemper often have permanent nerve damage that limits lifespan. It is highly contagious to unvaccinated dogs.
- **Canine parvovirus** infection causes dehydrating diarrhea and intestinal bleeding. It is most dangerous in both young and elderly dogs, with death rates reaching 70 to 80 percent.
- **Hepatitis** is a viral disease that severely damages the liver, kidneys, and sometimes the eyes.
- **Parainfluenza** virus causes severe respiratory infections in both young and very old dogs.
- **Leptospirosis** is an infection that causes liver and severe kidney damage. *It is transmissible to humans.* Dogs surviving leptospirosis have permanent kidney damage.

Puppies are vaccinated against distemper, parvovirus, hepatitis, and parainfluenza with a single multivalent vaccine beginning at six weeks of age, and every three weeks thereafter until four months of age. They are boosted twelve months later, followed by boosters every three years. Leptospirosis is given as a two-dose vaccine beginning at twelve weeks of age and three weeks later, followed by yearly boosters.

- **Bordetella** is a bacterial disease causing bronchitis, commonly known as kennel cough. The vaccine is given as needed as an initial series of two vaccines, then annual boosters.

#### DOGS AND CATS:

- **Rabies** may well be the best-known disease spread by animals to humans. The disease virus attacks the brain and is invariably fatal. Dogs and cats are vaccinated against rabies at 16 weeks of age. Cats and dogs are boosted one year later and, thereafter, every three years. By law, all dogs 4 months of age and older must be vaccinated against rabies. The temporary law requiring cats to be vaccinated against rabies has lapsed. For the health and safety of you and your cats, we recommend feline rabies vaccination.

#### CATS:

- **Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis** and **Calicivirus** cause most of the severe respiratory disease and pneumonias seen in cats. These viruses are especially dangerous in the young.
- **Panleukopenia (feline distemper)** is a deadly viral intestinal disease in cats of all ages. The few cats that do survive never fully regain their stamina.
- **Feline leukemia virus (FeLV)** causes a multitude of symptoms in cats ranging from solid tumors and marked immunosuppression, to bone marrow destruction, and severe anemia. Because the virus is spread primarily in the saliva, cats may be infected by bite wounds or by being washed or licked by an infected animal. It is not spread to humans.

A single multivalent vaccine is used to protect against **rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia**. Kittens are vaccinated at 6 to 8 weeks of age and boosted at 3-week intervals until four months of age. The **feline leukemia virus** vaccine is given separately beginning at 3 months of age, with one booster a month later. Thereafter, yearly boosters are required to maintain protection. This is recommended for all cats that go outdoors. All cats should be tested for FELV prior to vaccination.

**WHY VACCINATE MY PET?** None of us can provide a disease exposure-free environment. Depending upon the infectious disease, your pet may be exposed through direct contact with an infected animal or indirect contact through airborne organisms, or transfer via clothing, food, or water. The two ways to become immune to a disease are to become ill and survive or to be vaccinated against it. Remember, not all diseases can be survived. Only immunization through vaccination can add to the expected lifespan of your pet and, at the same time, *reduce the risk of rabies and leptospirosis to humans.*

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.

PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY