



MANOR
VETERINARY CLINIC

Vaccinating your dog



Vaccination protects animals against highly infectious and potentially fatal diseases. As well as protecting your own pet, it also prevents spread to other animals.

The initial primary course ensures the body's immunity is primed, then regular boosters will “top up” this immunity. Ensuring that your dog has a complete course of initial vaccinations and regular booster vaccinations is important for their health.

Which diseases are vaccinated against?

Canine Parvovirus (parvo) - Parvovirus causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea, usually in young puppies. It is very infectious and many puppies will die. It is often less severe in older dogs but if a bitch is infected when pregnant the puppies may have birth deformities.

Canine Distemper (hard pad) - Canine distemper is a serious viral disease in which affected dogs are very ill and may die. Symptoms include coughing, nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhoea and convulsions. Animals which recover may have ongoing illness for the rest of their lives.

Canine Infectious Hepatitis (canine adenovirus 1) - This viral disease attacks the liver and can cause liver failure. Many affected animals will die, but less severely affected animals get a cough, high temperature and may develop a white layer on their eyes.

Leptospirosis (Weil's disease) - This disease is caused by a bacterium, usually spread by rats in their urine. Dogs which spend time around water are more at risk and it can also spread to people. It is a very serious disease and can cause liver and kidney failure.

Kennel cough (canine infectious tracheobronchitis) - Kennel cough is not serious in otherwise healthy dogs, causing a cough in most cases, however it can spread to the lungs and cause a pneumonia. It is very infectious and can rapidly spread around the dog population from anywhere that dogs mix e.g. the dog park, training and agility classes - not just kennels. Kennel cough is caused by a combination of different viruses and bacteria. The yearly booster includes vaccination against Canine parainfluenza virus; however the vaccine applied up the nose including *Bordatella* and parainfluenza is more effective. As there are many different causes and strains of the disease, the vaccine will not afford 100% protection but reduces the severity and duration of the disease should your dog be unlucky enough to catch it.

Rabies - Vaccination against rabies is non compulsory in this country unless you wish to travel with your dog under the PETS travel scheme. Boosters are usually every 3 years but may be more frequent to comply with travel regulations.

When should my dog be vaccinated?

Puppies are protected against many infectious diseases through antibodies from their mother's milk. These antibodies prevent the vaccines from working properly until they start to wear off. Most puppies will have their first vaccination at 8 weeks then the second at 10-12 weeks. If a puppy is thought to have poor protection from its mother, they may be vaccinated earlier.

The maternal antibodies against parvovirus can disappear much later in some dogs and certain breeds e.g. Rottweilers may benefit from having an additional parvo vaccination at around 16 weeks to ensure complete immunity.

Why are yearly booster vaccinations necessary?

The protection given by vaccines is not life-long and wears off at different rates for particular vaccinations and in different individual animals. Some of the diseases have a low level of infection in the environment, so adult dogs may not encounter the wild strain enough to boost immunity and will be susceptible if they come in to contact with it. Repeated vaccinations are required to maintain adequate antibody titres. If your dog has missed the date of their regular booster vaccination, your vet may start with a new course to make sure your dog is fully protected.

Some of the newer vaccinations for distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus can be given at intervals of two or three years, but the duration of immunity for *Leptospirosis* or para-influenza vaccinations only last a year in most cases, making yearly boosters essential.

An annual consultation is also important for a veterinarian to check for any other health problems and most kennels will insist on seeing proof of regular vaccinations before looking after your dog.

Do vaccines always work?

The effectiveness of vaccines can be reduced by poor storage and inappropriate administration techniques but is also determined by the health of the animal being vaccinated. For this reason your vet will perform a full history and clinical examination before vaccinating your pet. They may choose to delay vaccinating your dog until any other diseases or conditions are treated so that your pet is more likely to respond to the vaccine. Vaccination of an individual already incubating infectious disease is unlikely to be effective. The ability of an animal to mount an adequate response to vaccination can also be affected by poor nutrition, concurrent drug therapy, e.g. immunosuppressive drugs, and stress.

If your pet is suffering from another ongoing condition vaccination is important. Animals with chronic, controlled diseases such as diabetes mellitus or heart disease should receive regular vaccination.

In any population, even with the strictest attention to correct administration, a small number of individuals may fail to respond to any vaccination.

Are vaccines safe?

Sometimes your dog will seem 'off colour' for a day or two after its vaccination and the injection site may become tender and swollen. If these signs do not subside after a few days, then contact your vet. Other adverse effects, which can include swelling of the face or immune mediated diseases are very rare. If you are at all concerned about any of these reactions then talk to your vet. Remember that the complications are extremely rare and that the risk of serious illness or death is much higher from the infectious diseases that the vaccine are protecting against.

Infectious disease may seem uncommon in dogs because most dogs are protected by vaccination. Your dog must receive regular vaccinations to be fully protected against these diseases.



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