

## COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2023

### IMPORTANCE OF VACCINATION



Advice on what vaccinations to give your pet involves a veterinary consultation discussion around your pet's lifestyle and level of risk of exposure to infectious disease.


Vaccinating your pet makes use of the body's natural response to infection. The vaccine mimics the infection without causing disease, and the animal's immune system response is at least as good as it would be to real infection. Some viruses such as canine parvovirus, hepatitis and distemper (DHP) induce such a strong immune response that a single injection is enough to provide a long period of immunity.


In young puppies and kittens some immunity is transferred from their mother when they are born. This maternal immunity declines over a variable period of time; it protects against infection but also prevents vaccine working which is why it is usual to wait until 8 weeks of age before starting a vaccination course. An initial vaccine course is usually two injections four weeks apart. The first to 'prime' the immune system, the second to boost immunity up to protective levels. However vaccination against parvovirus and distemper in a dog over 10 weeks of age is proven to be effective after just a single dose. As puppy socialisation is important the aim is for your puppy to be protected and out and about as early as possible.

All vaccine immunity wanes over time, unless it is boosted by subsequent exposure to infection or to booster vaccination. Canine parvovirus and feline enteritis vaccination has been proven to last three years, likely longer in some individuals, so our policy is to give a booster every three years. Other vaccinations, such as against leptospirosis, only just last a year.

Resurgence of cases of parvovirus and distemper have been reported in the U.K., and various strains of leptospirosis are prevalent in our area. Cat 'flu' and feline leukaemia virus are also widespread. Therefore, it is important that your pet receives regular booster jabs against these rare but often fatal diseases. If an animal's vaccination is allowed to lapse, the immunity will reduce until it is no longer protective (especially the case with leptospirosis). Our policy is that if the booster is overdue by more than three months there will not be enough immunity left to be boosted by a single injection and a re-start course (i.e., second injection) is needed.

### EXAM NEWS

 We are delighted to announce that Harriet Robinson has recently passed her AMTRA RAMA base and companion animal exams to become an Animal Medicines Advisor, C-SQP (Suitably Qualified Person). This is a legal category of professionally qualified people who are able to prescribe and/or supply certain categories of veterinary medicines (POM-VPS) such as wormers and flea and tick treatments and controls for companion animals.

 This means that, along with Anna, Ruth, Louise, Elaine, Karen and Glenys, we now have a team of 7 Companion Animal SQP's who are able to advise on correct use of and dispense/supply appropriate treatments.



## BOOSTER VACCINATION OR SEROLOGY BLOOD TEST?

A possible alternative to booster vaccination injections is to carry out regular serology blood tests, to show whether your pet has adequate levels of circulating antibody against specific infections. For virus diseases such as parvovirus this can be effective, giving a 'snapshot' of antibody levels at the time of the blood sample. These levels will be declining, at an unknown rate, so the question then is how often to repeat the blood test to check if levels are still adequate.

A test that examines the amount of antibodies and detects infectious exposures.



For leptospirosis, a bacterial infection usually acquired from the environment, serology does not work as the immunity is not in the form of circulating antibodies but rather in cell-mediated immunity (CMI) which does not show on a blood test. Our recommendation is to give dogs a leptospirosis booster every year, a regular serology blood test if desired otherwise a DHP booster every three years.

For cats as well we are moving to a regime where not all the vaccine components need to be given every time in the annual vaccination booster. The exact regime varies with different brands of vaccine.

As all vaccine immunity wanes over time, it is important your pet received their regular booster jabs.

## CAT VACCINATION

Kittens can start their vaccinations at 8-9 weeks old they receive a full clinical exam to ensure they are healthy enough to receive the vaccine and consists of two single dose inoculations 3-4 weeks apart with the beginning of immunity starting 2-3 weeks following the second vaccination.

When coming in for vaccinations a full clinical exam is done to ensure your cat or kitten is healthy enough to receive the vaccine. It is then recommended that they receive a booster vaccination annually to make sure they are always protected. It is especially important that booster vaccinations do not lapse as they will not be protected against harmful diseases. If a lapse does occur, a restart of their primary vaccination course will be needed.

The diseases we can vaccinate against in cats include:

- Feline herpes virus
- Feline calicivirus
- Feline panleucopenia
- Feline leukaemia virus



**Feline Herpes Virus**



**Feline Calicivirus**

## RABBIT VACCINATION

Rabbits can start their vaccination course at 5 weeks old. After a full clinical exam to ensure they are fit and healthy the vaccine is given as a single injection, and the beginning of the immunity starts 3 weeks following injection. A booster vaccination is also recommended yearly and lapse in vaccination should be avoided to ensure full protection.

The diseases we vaccinate against in rabbits include:

- Myxomatosis
- Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) caused by RHD virus and RHD type 2

### **Myxomatosis**



If you would like any more advice about the vaccines we use or the diseases we protect against please ask to speak to a member of the companion team.



Check out our website [www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk](http://www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk) for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

