

Why vaccinate?

Puppies and adult dogs are always exploring the world around them. As they do this they are very likely to come into contact with infectious disease.

When your dog encounters these infectious agents the immune system mounts a response to try and protect it against diseases that the infection may cause. Some of the diseases that your dog can come across may cause illness very quickly or damage the immune system so that the animal suffers disease and may die before it can fight off the infectious agent.

Vaccination teaches the immune system to recognise these infectious agents (usually viruses and bacteria) so that it is ready to respond to them when they are encountered. This means that your dog can fight off these infectious agents before they make it ill.

Preventive Health Checks

In order to ensure the continued well-being of your dog, regular preventive health checks are essential. Over time, from a puppy through maturity and into old age, your dog's preventive healthcare requirements will change. Your vet will be able to advise you how often these preventive health checks are necessary. As a minimum, your dog will receive a thorough health check at the time of the vaccination visit.



Vaccination Q & A

■ Why does my dog need to be vaccinated?

Most of the diseases we vaccinate against have no specific cure. Much of the veterinary treatment for these diseases only supports the animal in the hope that their immune system can overcome the infection.

Animals can die before the immune system has had a chance to respond. Vaccination means that the immune system is taught to recognise and fight diseases before your dog encounters them.

■ Why does my dog need to be vaccinated every year?

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, one vaccination will not provide lifelong protection. Secondly, the length of time one vaccination protects for will vary between individual animals. We know for sure that when vaccinated according to the manufacturer's instructions, our dogs will be protected for 12 months. After this length of time we cannot be sure that the dog is still protected.

■ Why do we still vaccinate against some diseases which occur infrequently?

All the diseases for which we have vaccines still occur every year in different parts of the country and are by no means eradicated. Fortunately so many dogs are protected by vaccination that these diseases cannot spread. However, if we stop vaccinating we risk these diseases re-establishing themselves.



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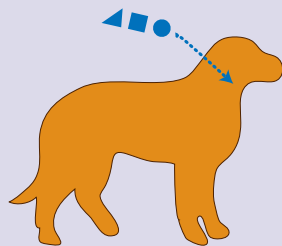


The benefits of vaccination

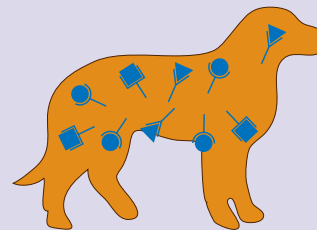
Your questions answered

How does vaccination work?

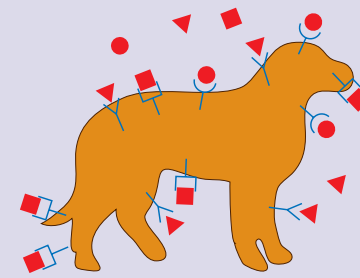
Vaccines contain harmless forms of the viruses and bacteria which cause the diseases your dog needs to be protected against. Following vaccination, your dog's immune system generates a protective response which will prevent the dangerous forms of these infectious agents making your dog ill. It is important that your dog is healthy at the time of vaccination so that its immune system can respond to the vaccine in this way.



Injected vaccine contains harmless versions of viruses from major diseases



Vaccine stimulates formation of antibodies and immunity



Providing a protective shield to ward off harmful disease

When to vaccinate

Young puppies are protected by immunity passed from their mother. Unfortunately this protection decreases rapidly. By vaccinating pups, once at 6-8 weeks old and again at 10 weeks of age, we can provide them with protection against illness before infectious agents have had much chance to attack. This protection needs to be maintained by an annual booster vaccination. These boosters ensure that your dog remains protected throughout its life. Your vet will send you a reminder when it is time for your dog to receive a booster vaccination.

It is important that puppies are socialised and habituated at an early age. This means getting them used to other dogs and the environment around them. Care must be taken to ensure that puppies are adequately protected when they are introduced to other dogs and the world around them.

What can we protect against?

■ Canine distemper (Hardpad)

This was one of the first diseases we were able to vaccinate against. There are still local outbreaks but the disease is not seen with the frequency that it was before vaccines became available. The virus targets a number of areas such as the gut, respiratory tract and nervous system. In some instances the

foot pads and nose can become cracked. Distemper is often fatal and has a long incubation period so it is usually too late to vaccinate after the outbreak has begun.

■ Infectious canine hepatitis

This is a disease which attacks the liver, kidneys, eyes and lungs of dogs. The disease is rapid and causes death within 24-36 hours. Some dogs can recover and then shed the virus for many months, posing a threat to other dogs.

■ Canine parvovirus

Parvovirus was first seen in the late seventies, killing thousands of dogs. The disease is still seen today although with a reduced frequency. The virus is very persistent in the environment, lasting for years. It is also unaffected by many household disinfectants. Dogs of all ages can become infected but puppies are particularly susceptible. Many affected dogs die in spite of veterinary care. Vaccination has proved very successful in reducing the scourge of this disease but has by no means eliminated it.

■ Leptospirosis

This is a condition which is caused by bacteria. We routinely vaccinate against two different forms of *Leptospira*. One is picked up from watercourses contaminated with the urine of infected rats. Dogs can encounter this when swimming or drinking. This form of the bacterium attacks the liver and

kidneys and is often fatal. It can also be transmitted to humans. The second form is caught from the urine of other infected dogs. It targets the kidneys and damages them. Sometimes the damage only becomes evident as the dog becomes older and develops kidney failure.

■ Canine parainfluenza

Parainfluenza is a component of kennel cough. Several infectious agents passed on through airborne droplets from one dog to another cause this disease, including bordetella. The main signs are a harsh hacking cough with gagging and retching which gives the appearance of having something stuck in the throat.

■ Rabies

Is a disease that is not present in the UK which is fortunate as it is both fatal and transmissible to humans. Recent changes in the rules on quarantine may mean that it is desirable to protect dogs against this disease so that they can travel abroad.

