

Vaccinations

A photograph of a veterinary clinic. A male veterinarian in green scrubs is focused on preparing a small glass vial. To his right, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue jacket, gently holds a fluffy white puppy. The puppy is sitting on a light green examination table. The background shows shelves with various medical supplies and a window with a view of the outdoors.

Your new puppy may have already received a vaccination. If your puppy is aged 7 or 8 weeks, you should know that he is not fully protected against many diseases and care must be taken when socialising until your puppy has completely finished his vaccination programme. For your puppy's best protection it is essential to maintain vaccination throughout your pet's life.

Why Should I Vaccinate My Dog?

● The principal of vaccination is to stimulate the body's defences. These defences involve a number of cells and body chemicals of which the best known is antibodies. Puppies are protected against many infectious diseases by antibodies present in their mother's milk (colostrum) which they receive in the first few hours of life. This protection from maternal antibodies lasts less than 3 months. For this reason vaccination schedules start around the age of 2 months with the initial injection, and are completed from 3 months of age, when maternal antibodies have decreased.

● *For each animal the veterinary surgeon will adapt the vaccination programme according to your pet's lifestyle and local disease conditions. Some vaccines may be combined in the same syringe, others must be administered in separate sites but on the same day. As in children, most of the primary vaccinations are carried out using a series of injections.*

Why Is It Necessary To Have Repeat Vaccinations?

● Many people believe that if they have their pets vaccinated when they are puppies, the immunity they receive will protect them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately this is not the case. To maintain protection regular booster vaccinations are required. Re-vaccination stimulates the immune response so that protection is offered for an additional period. Without these regular vaccinations, your dog's immune system may not be able to protect it from serious, often fatal diseases.

Infectious disease in the dog and it's prevention.

What can we vaccinate against?

● *There are five major infectious diseases affecting dogs today. Parvovirus, Distemper, Hepatitis Leptospirosis and 'Kennel cough'. All are highly contagious and can be difficult to treat.*

● *Canine parvovirus* is perhaps the most serious and common of canine infectious diseases. This disease is a major problem, with outbreaks still occurring regularly across the country. The onset is sudden, with vomiting and foul, bloody diarrhoea that leads to rapid dehydration and collapse. The heart may also be attacked by the virus. The death of your pet can occur within 24 hours. The only protection against this distressing disease is by vaccination.

● Vaccinations ●

● **Canine Distemper** is highly contagious and often fatal. Those pets that survive the initial viral attack are often left with permanent disability such as deformed teeth, nervous twitches or a predisposition to distressing epileptic fits. Treatment is often unsuccessful as the incubation period is long – often about three weeks – it is usually too late to vaccinate when an outbreak occurs.

● **Canine Hepatitis** attacks the liver. In acute cases the death of your pet can occur within 24-36 hours. Those pets that recover from the disease may become carriers and spread the virus to infect other dogs.

● **Leptospirosis** is caused by a bacteria that is spread in the urine of infected animals. Two major forms of the disease exist in dogs. One, which causes acute illness and jaundice, is often caught from rats – either by the animal being bitten or coming into contact with rat urine. The other type can also cause acute disease but frequently takes a chronic form. This leads to the

slow destruction of the kidneys and renal failure can occur many years after the original infection.

● **Canine Parainfluenza** virus is one of the pathogens responsible for the disease known as ‘Kennel Cough’. The other main pathogen is the bacteria *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Pets with this disease suffer from a harsh, dry cough which can last for many weeks, causing distress for both the dog and the owner.

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Your vet will complete a certificate to record the vaccinations.

This ‘vaccination book’ contains the details of each vaccine and the date given.

It is signed by the vet as a permanent record and is required as proof of your pet’s vaccination history when going to kennels.

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