



Pet Behavior Counseling

Helping you and your pet become best friends for life.

RETHINKING ANNUAL VACCINES

An annual "well-pet" exam, by your pet's veterinarian, is one of the best investments you can make in your furry friend. However; a growing number of veterinarians and pet owners are rethinking the wisdom of annual vaccinations. There is increasing evidence that annual vaccinations may be unnecessary, and may in fact be harmful, especially if your pet is not in perfect health.

There is no question that vaccinations do build immunity and protect our pets from a variety of diseases. However, we also know that the immunity we and our pets receive from vaccinations lasts for a long time. Just as it is unnecessary for us to be vaccinated against polio and measles every year, it is unnecessary for most of our pets to get an annual distemper vaccine.

Veterinary immunologist Ronald Schultz and Tom Phillips make the following statement in *Current Veterinary Therapy, volume XI*, pp202-206, 1992. "A practice that was started many years ago and that lacks scientific validity or verification is annual revaccination. Almost without exception there is no immunologic requirement for annual revaccination. Immunity to viruses persists for years in the life of the animal."

In many cases, annual revaccination is not only unnecessary, but may be harmful. Anecdotal and research data suggests a correlation between vaccinations and chronic disease such as arthritis, allergies, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, repeated ear infections, skin disease, heart disease, diabetes, kidney failure, behavioral problems and cancer. Two years ago the vaccination guidelines for cats were changed because of clear evidence that rabies and feline leukemia vaccines have caused a fatal type of tumor in many cats.

Before automatically saying "yes" to annual revaccinations, discuss this issue with your veterinarian. If you choose not to vaccinate your pet on an annual basis, it is important that you still verify they are protected against potentially fatal diseases such as distemper and parvovirus in dogs and feline panleukopenia in cats. Your veterinarian can do this for you with a test called a "titer." A titer test measures the antibody levels in your pet's blood and can tell you if your pet has sufficient immunity.

As I indicated in our cover article, our Golden, Tikken developed a severe behavioral problem due to an annual vaccination. Rather than automatically having our pets vaccinated annually, we are doing titers tests, and only vaccinating if the titer suggests they do not have sufficient immunity.

As you all know, Green Acres, like most kennels, requires proof of vaccination for pets that are in our care. What is really important from our perspective is proof of immunity. We recognize that many of you may elect to not have your pets vaccinated annually. In those cases, in lieu of proof of vaccination, we will accept a letter from your Veterinarian, which states that they have performed titer tests on your pet and that they believe them to have sufficient immunity. Due to the nature of rabies, we will continue to require current vaccinations for this disease.

For more information on this topic, check the following web addresses:

www.altvetmed.com/vaccine.html

www.austinholistic.com/articles/WFalconer001.html

www.austinholistic.com/articles/WFalconer002.html

www.naturalrearing.com/J_In_Learning/Immunization/vaccinations/VACCINATIONSPart2.htm

www.chinesecrestedmagazine.com/articles3.shtml

Originally published in Green Acres Kennel Shop P^{aw} Prints, April 2002.

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Over vaccination Article in Wall Street Journal

Our Spring newsletter included an article on the growing concern of over vaccination of our pets. We have been pleased to hear that so many of you that have explored this issue and discussed it with us and your veterinarians in detail. The July 31st issue of the Wall Street Journal contained a headline of **Are Annual Shots Overkill?** which led to an extensive article on the subject. The article hit on the same major points we tried to make:

Vaccines licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture are tested to ensure they protect pets against disease, usually for one year. But the tests don't detect long-term side effects or measure the duration of a vaccine's effectiveness. Recent and continuing studies at several universities suggest that protection from vaccines may last for years, which would make annual shots a waste of money — at the very least.

In a policy statement last year, the American Veterinary Medical Association acknowledged that the practice of annual vaccinations is based on "historical precedent" and "not on scientific data."

Veterinarian Kathleen Neuhoff, a veterinarian in Mishawaka, IN, and president of the American Animal Hospital Association was quoted as saying "We're now doing 40% less vaccination than five years ago," as a result of the emerging health risks of vaccines.

If you choose not to vaccinate your pet annually, we believe it is important that you ask your veterinarian to perform an annual "titer" test. This test, which involves collecting a blood sample, will measure the antibody levels in your pet's blood. A titer test will tell you if your pet has sufficient immunity against potentially fatal diseases such as distemper and parvovirus in dogs and feline panleukopenia in cats. In lieu of proof of vaccination, we will accept a letter from your veterinarian, which states that they have performed titer tests on your pet and that they believe them to have sufficient immunity. Due to the nature of rabies, we will continue to require current vaccinations for this disease.

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