

Vaccinating your Pets

Dogs and cats, puppies and kittens are at risk of infection by a number of viruses. Not all pets that contract these diseases can be cured, and some of these viruses can be life threatening. A simple vaccination program can protect them from most of these diseases. Vaccinations are a cost effective way of protecting your furry family member, and prevent the high costs involved with the treatment of these diseases. All vaccines used are produced to the highest standards of safety and effectiveness.

Puppies and Kittens...

Puppies and kittens are 'temporarily' protected against many diseases by antibodies received through their mother's milk. These maternal antibodies decline in the first couple of months of their lives, however until they drop sufficiently they can also neutralise vaccines. This is why a series of vaccinations is necessary for both puppies and kittens.

Adult Dogs and Cats...

The immunity from puppy and kitten vaccinations weakens over time and your pet can again become susceptible to disease. Annual health checks and booster vaccinations will provide the best protection for the life of your pet.

After Vaccination Care...

Following vaccination your pet may be off-colour for a day or two, or have some slight swelling or tenderness at the injection site. Access to food and water and a comfortable area to rest are usually all that is required for a quick recovery. However, if the response seems more severe, you should contact us for advice.

A Guide to Vaccinations...

Initial vaccination programs should begin when a puppy or kitten is 6-8 weeks of age. From then, they will require a booster 4 weeks later (10-12 weeks of age) and then again another 4 weeks later (14-16 weeks of age). Please note that puppies and kittens are not fully protected until 2 weeks after their initial vaccination course, and until then, kittens should be kept indoors and puppies kept on your own property at all times. This form of **quarantine** is necessary to protect your new family member. Unfortunately for puppies, this means no walks to the park, swims at the beach or visits to friend's houses until the quarantine period is over. We recommend you socialise and train your puppy in a safe environment such as puppy pre-school. Cats cope very well kept entirely indoors, however if you do want to allow your cat outside, ensure they have a curfew ie: inside before dark. This will reduce fighting with other cats, reduce the chance of being hit by a car, and help to reduce the loss of wildlife.



Infectious diseases of dogs that we vaccinate against...

Canine Parvovirus

Canine parvovirus is a disease that affects dogs of all ages but is most serious in young pups and older dogs. The virus attacks the intestines causing bloodstained diarrhoea, uncontrollable vomiting and severe abdominal pain. Dogs often die from severe dehydration despite intensive veterinary care.

It is not necessary to have direct contact with other dogs for the disease to be spread. The virus is so persistent that the infected dog's environment needs to be cleaned with a potent disinfectant to prevent spread to other dogs. Outbreaks occur regularly throughout Australia, especially in the top end wet season.

Canine Distemper

Canine distemper is a highly contagious viral disease that can affect dogs of any age with young puppies being at highest risk.

Symptoms vary but can include fever, coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite and depression. Muscle tremors, fits and paralysis usually occur later in the disease. Treatment is usually ineffective and the recovery rate very low. Dogs that do recover may have permanent brain damage.

Canine Hepatitis

Canine hepatitis is a viral disease which, like distemper is extremely contagious and often fatal. Dogs of any age can become infected however severe cases are rare in dogs over two years of age.

Symptoms include high fever, depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea and acute abdominal pain. In severe cases death can occur within 24 to 36 hours. Dogs that recover may develop long term liver and kidney problems and can act as carriers spreading the disease to other dogs for many months.

Canine Cough (Kennel Cough)

Canine cough is a condition produced by several highly infectious diseases, which can be easily spread wherever dogs congregate, such as parks, shows, obedience schools and boarding kennels. Among the infectious agents associated with canine cough is the bacterium known as bordetella bronchiseptica and the canine viruses parainfluenza, adenovirus type 2 and distemper.

Affected dogs have a dry hacking cough which can persist for several weeks. It is distressing for pet dogs and their owners. Pneumonia can also be a consequence of infection.

Vaccinated dogs may still contract and pass on the infection however vaccination will significantly reduce the severity of disease and mean recovery is quicker.

Canine Leptospirosis

Canine leptospirosis is a serious disease risk in some areas and can cause high death rates. In Darwin we recommend vaccination against the strain *Leptospira australis*. It is spread by the urine of rats and mice and is usually transmitted to dogs by contact with contaminated food and water.

There's an increased risk where high rat populations exist such as rubbish dumps and low lying water or dams. Incidence can also increase after long periods of wet weather, when rat populations are

forced to move or concentrate. Leptospirosis is an animal disease that can be passed to humans who may then suffer a persisting "flu like" illness.

To start the immune response a course of two injections at 3-6week intervals is required. Vaccination boosters are recommended once yearly before the wet season.

Tetanus

What about tetanus vaccination? Dogs and cats are at less risk of tetanus than people or horses are. For some reason they are less likely to show toxicity if the bacterium producing the toxin gets into a wound. For this reason we don't routinely advocate Tetanus vaccination in dogs and cats. We may however recommend vaccination if a wound is suffered that puts them at risk of Tetanus.



Infectious diseases of cats that we vaccinate against...

Feline Enteritis (also known as Feline Panleucopenia)

Feline enteritis is very contagious and the death rate is high, especially under 12 months of age. Pregnant cats may lose their young or give birth to kittens with abnormalities, quite often with brain damage. Symptoms are depression, loss of appetite, uncontrollable vomiting and diarrhoea, often with blood and severe abdominal pain.

The virus spreads so easily that heavily contaminated areas may need cleaning with a special disinfectant. Cats that do recover may continue to carry the virus for some time and infect other cats.

Feline Respiratory Disease (Cat Flu)

Cat Flu is caused in 90% of cases by feline herpesvirus (feline rhinotracheitis) and/or feline calicivirus.

Feline respiratory disease affects cats of all ages, especially young kittens, Siamese and Burmese cats. It is highly contagious and causes sneezing, coughing, runny eyes, nasal discharge, loss of appetite and tongue ulcers.

Fortunately, the death rate is low except in young kittens, but the disease is distressing and may persist for several weeks. Recovered cats can continue to carry and spread the infection for long periods, and can show signs of the disease again if they become stressed.

Chlamydia (also known as Chlamydophila)

Feline Chlamydia causes a severe persistent conjunctivitis in up to 30% of cats.

Kittens are more severely affected by Chlamydia when also infected with "Cat Flu", and Chlamydia can be shed for many months. Vaccination against cat flu and Chlamydia helps protect against clinical disease.

Feline Leukaemia (FeLV)

Feline Leukaemia is a serious disease of cats caused by feline leukaemia virus.

The virus attacks the immune system and may be associated with lack of appetite, weight loss and apathy, pale or yellow mucous membranes, vomiting, diarrhoea, reproductive problems, increased susceptibility to other infections, leukaemia and tumours. Many cats may be infected and show no signs at all.

About one third of infected cats will remain chronically infected and may shed virus in their saliva,

tears, nasal secretions and urine. The disease is then spread to uninfected cats by mutual grooming, fighting, sneezing or even flea bites.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Feline AIDS is a disease caused by infection with feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and affects the cat's immune system. Their natural defence against attack by other diseases may be seriously affected, much in the same way as human AIDS.

This disease is not transmissible to humans.

FIV is almost always transmitted by bites from infected cats. The virus that causes the disease is present in saliva. While some infected cats show no sign of disease, others may display initial symptoms such as fever, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, lethargy and swollen lymph nodes.

As the disease progresses, symptoms may occur such as weight loss, sores in and around the mouth, eye lesions, poor coat and chronic infections.

Eventually, the immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections and diseases. As a result, the cat may die from one of these subsequent infections.

Unfortunately in Australia, a lot of cats are infected with this virus.

If you have any further questions about vaccinations and how best to care for your furry family members, the vets and nurses at University Avenue Vet Hospital are here to help – just call us on 8931 0455.