

## Vaccinations and Preventative Measures:



### ***When should a puppy or kitten be scheduled for vaccinations?***

We recommend beginning vaccinations at 6-8 weeks of age. Vaccinations given earlier than 6 weeks of age are ineffective due to the presence of maternal antibodies. Maternal antibodies are passed from mother to kitten through the milk, and provide immunity to young puppies and kittens until they can develop immunity of their own. Maternal antibodies interfere with vaccinations, rendering them ineffective; therefore, we do not recommend beginning vaccinations until 6-8 weeks of age, when animals begin to lose these antibodies.



### ***How often should my pet be vaccinated?***

We recommend the vaccinations be given every 3-4 weeks during the puppy and kitten series, then again at one year of age. After the one year booster, the distemper/parvo combination in dogs and the upper respiratory vaccination in cats are recommended every 3 years in our practice. There is a large body of evidence in veterinary medicine that suggests that these vaccinations are not necessary on a yearly basis. We'd be happy to discuss this further at your next visit.

Initial rabies vaccination is given after your pet reaches 3 - 4 months of age and is boosted one year later to ensure the effectiveness of the vaccine. Adult canine vaccinations (after that booster) are affected by the recent change in the City of Wichita's ordinance which goes into effect on July 1, 2009. Rabies vaccines for adult dogs will be required every three years after that point, and in the intervening years, in lieu of the vaccination, the City requires a yearly examination by a veterinarian who certifies that the dog is healthy, signs off on the official license form, and issues a current rabies tag.

We will continue to vaccinate cats yearly for rabies. The difference is that a cat can develop, though rarely, a malignancy called a fibrosarcoma from the adjuvants (chemicals) added to the three year rabies vaccines. Dogs are not prone to fibrosarcoma development. Therefore, for the safety of our feline patients, we will still recommend a non-adjuvanted one-year rabies vaccine for cats.

## ***Canine Leptospirosis Vaccine***

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease of dogs and other mammals that particularly affects the liver or kidneys. Leptospira bacteria are carried mainly by rats and other rodents along with wildlife such as raccoons and opossums but can affect almost any mammalian species, including people. The fact that humans can contract Lepto (for short) from these animal sources (but especially from their own pets), makes it a zoological disease. Lepto is spread through the urine of an infected animal and is ingested by other animals through, for example, contaminated water sources, areas where rodents and/or raccoons congregate, and the like. A dog that swims in contaminated water can even become infected through its skin if the skin is damaged or thin. Signs of infection may be extreme lethargy, lack of desire to eat, and perhaps vomiting. Fever may or may not be present, but other signs include diarrhea, excessive drinking, and abdominal discomfort. Of course, many of these symptoms are shared with other diseases and disorders, but Leptospirosis is a possibility if one factors in the dog's activities, habits, and environmental exposure. Effective treatment consists of a course of antibiotics and concurrent intensive hospital care which are especially effective if the disease is caught early and treatment is begun immediately. We have seen an increased incidence of this disease in our practice and, therefore, we are strongly recommending the Leptospirosis vaccine to be administered to our canine patients as a preventive measure. **See more details in our Newsletter section here on our website.**

## ***Are there any side-effects to vaccinations?***

Vaccinations are generally very safe, but reactions can occur. Occasionally, a pet can experience mild lethargy, vomiting, or diarrhea after a vaccine. Local reactions can occur and can appear as painful or non-painful knots in the area of vaccination, small bumps on the skin, or a swollen muzzle/face. Severe vaccination reactions are rare, but can be quite serious. If you are concerned about your pet post-vaccination, please call us immediately. We may recommend your pet be seen by a veterinarian.

