



Yosemite Pet Hospital, Inc

Exceptional Care...

for Exceptional Pets

A CONSUMER GUIDE TO VACCINATING YOUR PET

Thank you for your interest in learning more about vaccinations for your pet. Many people “shop around” for the lowest price available for vaccinations, without really understanding why the costs can vary so much. Vaccine Clinics may appear to offer a lower cost option, but this may not really be the case. You may be paying for vaccines that your pet does not need, or you may be getting annual vaccinations that are only required every 2-3 years. You may also be exposing your pet to potential long term, and costly medical issues.

This guide was created to help you better understand the difference between a vaccine clinic versus having your pet vaccinated at Yosemite Pet Hospital, and to help you make a more informed choice regarding where to take your family of pets for their regular vaccinations.

There are several factors to consider in this decision making process:

1. **Is it important to vaccinate my pet?**
2. **How do I know which vaccines my pet may or may not need?**
3. **How important is a physical examination for my pet?**
4. **Do I need to get my pet vaccinated every year?**
5. **Will the vaccines be handled and stored properly at the “shot clinic” location?**
6. **Is it true that certain types of vaccines have been associated with an increased risk of cancer in cats?**
7. **Other than vaccinating my cat with nonadjuvanted vaccines, is there anything else that can be done to help minimize this risk of cancer?**
8. **Should my cat be tested for feline leukemia virus prior to vaccinating it for feline leukemia?**
9. **Does the vaccination provider maintain records for your pet?**

Vaccination Check List (on last page)

The following information should help you work through these important questions.

1. **Is it important to vaccinate my pet?**
Yes! Pets should be vaccinated to protect them from many highly contagious and deadly diseases. Experts agree that widespread use of vaccines within the last century has prevented death and disease in millions of animals. Even though some formerly common diseases have now become uncommon, vaccination is still highly recommended because these serious disease agents continue to be present in the environment.

2. How do I know which vaccines my pet may or may not need?

There are two groups of vaccines your veterinarian considers: core vaccines and noncore vaccines.

- a. **Core vaccines** protect against diseases that are serious, potentially fatal and transmitted relatively easily. Core vaccines are generally recommended for all cats and dogs.
- b. **Noncore vaccines** are reserved for patients at specific risk for infection due to lifestyle, access to other animals, and travel to other geographic locations, since these factors affect your pet's risk of exposure to disease. Noncore vaccines should be administered when the risk of the disease is significant enough to override any risk associated with vaccination.

At Yosemite Pet Hospital we assess your pet's needs through careful questioning and history taking. Giving your pet vaccines it does not need increases the risk of reactions. You also end up paying for unnecessary vaccinations.

3. How important is a physical examination for my pet?

Regular physical examinations are the best way to reduce the lifetime cost of veterinary medical care and provide your pet with a healthy, happy lifestyle.

Considering pets have a relatively shorter life span, a pet ages much more rapidly than a human. A yearly examination for you pet is like you seeing the Doctor every 4-7 years.

A pet does not always demonstrate early signs of disease, nor can they easily communicate discomfort to us. Often pets develop diseases that go unnoticed, even to the most attentive owner. Veterinarians are skilled in detecting conditions that have a gradual onset and subtle signs. Early detection allows problems to be treated earlier which in most instances is easier and more affordable.

Veterinarians also help to prevent certain problems such as heart disease, kidney & liver disease, dental disease and internal and external parasite infections, by examining your pet annually, or more frequently as recommended. Questions about behavior, nutrition, and preventative care can also be addressed during an examination.

Performing a physical examination prior to vaccination ensures your pet is healthy enough to receive its vaccinations. Vaccination, in some cases, may aggravate certain medical conditions. In some cases vaccinations would be delayed until your pet's medical issue has been addressed.

4. Do I need to get my pet vaccinated every year?

How often your pet needs to be vaccinated is determined by your pet's age and the types of vaccinations they are receiving.

For many years, a set of annual vaccinations was considered normal and necessary for dogs and cats. Veterinarians have since learned more about diseases and pets' immune systems. There is increasing evidence that immunity triggered by some vaccines provides protection beyond one year. While the immunity triggered by other vaccines may fail to protect for a full year. As a result, your pet may have a variety of vaccination schedules, with some vaccines given every 2-3 years, and other vaccines required annually or in some occasions more frequently. There is no single schedule that is best for all pets.

This has created a great deal of misunderstanding amongst pet owners. Many people assume that "annual shots" is the best way to a healthy lifestyle for their pet. In reality, this may result in increased risk for your pets, and higher cost factors.

Very young puppies and kittens are highly susceptible to infectious diseases. This is especially true as the natural immunity provided in their mothers' milk gradually wears off. To keep gaps in protection as narrow as possible and to provide optimal protection against disease for the first few months of life, a series of vaccinations are scheduled, usually 3-4 weeks apart. For most puppies and kittens, the final vaccination in the series is administered when they are 16 weeks old or older.

All vaccinations do not have to be administered every year. Vaccinating your pet for vaccines it does not need increases the risk of reactions and increases your costs for duplicated vaccines and potential costs associated with reactions should they occur.

5. Will the vaccines be handled and stored properly at the "shot clinic" location?

Vaccines are available through sources other than your veterinarian. However, be advised that if a vaccine is not up-to-date, has been stored or handled improperly, or is not administered correctly, it may not protect your pet against disease.

Certain vaccines require "reconstitution" which means injecting a liquid into the powder form of the vaccine to make it suitable for injection. These products need to be kept at certain temperatures and once reconstituted have to be administered within a certain amount of time (sometimes in as little as 15 minutes) to ensure effectiveness of the vaccine.

In order to get people in and out as quickly as possible some vaccine clinics will reconstitute vaccines hours earlier and have them sitting at room temperature or outside in the sun. If these improperly stored and handled vaccines are administered they may not provide the protection against disease that you are paying for.

Yosemite Pet Hospital does not prepare vaccines for administration until after your pet has been examined and its vaccine needs properly assessed.

6. Is it true that certain types of vaccines have been associated with an increased risk of cancer in cats?

Yes. There have been numerous cases of cancerous tumors found around the areas where cats are typically given vaccine injections. There are many theories on what may be causing these tumors. Some research point towards the use of "adjuvanted vaccines" as a potential culprit. Indeed, some fibrosarcomas (a type of cancer) have been found to have vaccine adjuvant embedded within them. It can take as little as 2 months and as long as 10 years to develop a vaccine site tumor.

To facilitate immune stimulation in vaccines, a substance called an adjuvant is often used. This material holds the vaccine in the area of the injection site for a couple of weeks so it can be released slowly, allowing immune stimulation to take place. This kind of stimulation can lead to local inflammation in the area of vaccination. One theory is that this inflammation is what leads to precancerous changes in the local cells.

Now "recombinant" vaccinations are available that allow a live non- adjuvanted approach to vaccination against diseases like rabies and feline leukemia virus. These are preferable over the adjuvanted killed vaccines that have been heavily implicated in sarcoma (cancer) formation.

Some vaccines are now administered in a needle-free manner (either nasally or with a special spray gun) to avoid creating a deposit of vaccine in the muscle and skin tissues.

The use of these improved vaccination techniques provide a much better option to help ensure a healthy lifestyle for your cat, and to lower the life span costs of veterinary care.

Yosemite Pet Hospital minimizes the risk of vaccine related cancer in cats by using nonadjuvanted vaccines and updated vaccine application techniques.

7. Other than vaccinating my cat with nonadjuvanted vaccines, is there anything else that can be done to help minimize the risk of cancer?

The American Association of Feline Practitioners has set guidelines for vaccinating your cat. <http://catvets.com/professionals/guidelines/publications/?Id=176>. They recommend vaccinating your pet in certain locations to enhance follow up care in the event tumor formation occurs. This includes eliminating the scruff of the neck as an injection site.

Yosemite Pet Hospital follows these guidelines and does not vaccinate cats in the scruff of the neck which would make it much more difficult to treat your pet should it develop a tumor.

8. Should my cat be tested for feline leukemia virus prior to vaccinating it for feline leukemia?

Yes- Early detection will help you maintain the health of your cat, and will also allow you to prevent spreading the infection to other cats. If your pet has feline leukemia there is no point in vaccinating it for a disease it already has. This simply increases its risk for reaction and potential tumor formation.

Yosemite Pet Hospital does not vaccinate cats for feline leukemia without ensuring they have been tested prior.

9. Does the vaccination provider maintain records for your pet?

Many vaccine clinics will hand you a receipt when your pet is vaccinated. If this receipt is lost and records are not adequately kept, this can lead to repeated vaccination, increased cost and increased risk of vaccine reaction.

Yosemite Pet Hospital keeps track of your pet's vaccination records in their computerized system. If proof of vaccination is needed, these records can be printed out for you. We also send owners their reminders both through mail and e mail at the owner's request.

VACCINATION CHECK LIST

When you are "shopping" for vaccinations, we recommend you refer to this check list and ask the vaccine provider how they address these important vaccination factors:

- Does the Vaccination Provider take into consideration my pets lifestyle and environment when determining which vaccines are required?

Yes No

- Will my pet receive a Physical Exam performed by a licensed veterinarian?

- Does the Vaccination Provider recommend annual vaccinations, or do they vary the schedule according to the type of vaccine?

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- What types of vaccines are being used for my cat?

Adjuvanted vaccines Non adjuvanted (recombinant) vaccines

- Where will the vaccinations be injected into my cat?

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- Will my cat be tested for feline leukemia virus prior to vaccinating it for feline leukemia? Yes No

- Are the vaccines made up ahead of time and are they stored properly at the location of the vaccine clinic?

Yes No

- Will the Vaccination Provider maintain records of my pets' vaccine history?

Yes No