

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## About Vaccines

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Most of us realize that vaccinations are necessary for dogs, cats and people. We know it is the safest, cheapest, and most reliable way to keep our pets healthy. But perhaps you have heard some people say that vaccines don't work, they make animals sick, or are just a way for vets to make money.

Although there may be questions about vaccinations, there should be no question about the fact that **vaccinations save lives** and some are **required by law**.

Vaccines work by stimulating the immune system to produce antibodies to fight a specific disease. This only works if your pet has a functioning immune system, and the vaccine is given at the correct times and in the correct manner. If your pet is sick, the vaccine is outdated or administered improperly, a sufficient immune response may not be produced.

Although no vaccine is effective 100%, of the time in 100% of the animals, they cannot get approval by the FDA if they are not effective most of the time. And although there are no vaccines that can claim that they never produce side effects, some of the newer recombinant vaccines are 99.25% reaction free.

Most reactions are very mild (swelling at the injection site, mild fever) but some can be more serious. The most common is an allergic reaction. This can vary from a case of hives to severe shock which occurs minutes after the injection. These reactions are not common and I have never heard of an animal dying from one. However, I have seen hundreds die from not being vaccinated. Allergic reactions are usually controlled by giving an injection of Dexamethasone.

A very serious vaccine reaction in cats is a tumor called a Sarcoma. Although not all sarcomas are caused by vaccines, there has been evidence that some are induced by materials in the vaccines. These sarcomas are rare and should not cause you to avoid vaccinations for your pet. Again, the new recombinant vaccines being developed should not cause sarcomas.

Now we come to who should be vaccinated and when. Your pet's lifestyle should be assessed to find out what diseases he is at risk for and therefore what vaccines he will need. It is the very young and the very old that are most at risk of becoming sick and dying of infectious diseases, just like with people. Puppies and kittens should be started on their vaccination series when they are six weeks old.

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They need a series of injections that first year to develop good immunity. DO NOT wait to start your pet's shots. And DO NOT stop vaccinating your pet when he becomes older. That is when he deserves and needs all the protection he can get.

Rabies vaccinations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian. Your pet should be examined by a Veterinarian before receiving other vaccinations to make sure he is healthy. Vaccinations need to be shipped on ice and kept cold. Improper handling of the vaccine will make it ineffective. If you give the wrong vaccine it will not help your pet. If you give it at the wrong times, it will not help your pet. If you give a vaccine at home and your pet has an allergic reaction, you may not be able to help your pet. Therefore we feel vaccinations should be done by a Veterinarian at an animal hospital

If you have any questions, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643.