

Adams Vets™

There are a number of highly infectious and potentially fatal diseases which can affect your dog and cat. There is no treatment for many of these diseases and young puppies and kittens who catch them often die. However, for many of these conditions there is a simple protection in the form of vaccination. Ensuring that your dog or cat completes an initial course of vaccinations and then receives regular booster jabs is important if you want to keep your dog and cat fit and healthy.

How do vaccines work? Most vaccines are given by injection under the skin. They all work by training the white blood cells in your pet's body how to recognise and attack the viruses or bacteria contained in the vaccine. This should prevent infection with that particular bug if your pet is in contact with it again.

When should my dog / cat be vaccinated?

Puppies and kittens are protected against many infectious diseases through compounds called antibodies, which they receive in the first few hours from their mother's milk (colostrum). Early vaccination is pointless because these antibodies prevent vaccines working properly. However, by about seven weeks the immunity provided by the mother begins to wear off. For most of the above diseases, puppies should be given their first vaccination at about 6-8 weeks and then given a second vaccination at ten to twelve weeks. kittens should be given their first vaccination at about nine weeks and then given a second vaccination at about twelve weeks. For most of the above diseases, Until your kitten has received all its injections and for a few days after, it should not

mix with other cats unless you can be certain that they are free of disease. If puppies are vaccinated at a young age they can mix with other dogs. Early socialisation is beneficial for development. Until your puppy has received all its injections (and for a few days after), it should not mix with other dogs unless you can be certain that they are fully vaccinated and free of disease.



Why is it necessary to have repeat vaccinations?

Most vaccination courses start with two separate injections about three weeks apart. This course must be completed before your puppy or kitten is fully protected by the vaccine. The protection given by most vaccines wears off in time and at different rates for each particular vaccine. Repeated vaccination is necessary to maintain adequate antibody. If your dog or cat has missed the date of its regular booster vaccination by a year or two, it is safer to start again

with a new course of injections. Most kennels and catteries will insist on seeing proof of regular vaccinations.

Do vaccines always work? The quality of vaccines available today is very high but occasionally an individual dog or cat may not get the full protection from the vaccine. This may be because the pet was already ill or was stressed when it was vaccinated and its immune system wasn't working properly. We will examine your pet before vaccination and if any signs of illness are detected, we will delay vaccination until your pet is well again.

Can vaccinations be dangerous? Often your dog or cat will seem 'off colour' for a day or two after its vaccination and the injection site may also become tender and swollen. If these effects do not wear off it is worth taking your pet back to see us. If you are concerned about any symptoms do not hesitate to contact us for reassurance or advice.



What diseases can my dog be vaccinated against?

Canine distemper

Canine distemper is a serious disease of dogs caused by a virus. Affected dogs are often very ill and many die from the disease. Symptoms include coughing, a snotty nose, vomiting, diarrhoea and convulsions. Animals which recover may have ongoing illnesses for the rest of their lives. The vaccine is very effective and if given

every 2-3 years will produce full protection against the disease.

Canine Infectious Hepatitis

This is a disease caused by a virus which attacks the liver and can cause liver failure. Many animals who succumb to this disease will die. Less severely affected dogs may have a cough and high temperature and may also develop a white layer on the front of the eye. There is no specific treatment for the disease but vaccination gives good protection.

Canine parvovirus

A disease due to a virus which causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea, usually in young puppies. Many puppies affected by the disease will die. The disease is often less severe in older dogs but if bitches are infected while they are pregnant the puppies may be born with deformities.

Leptospirosis

This is an infection caused by a bacterium. The disease is usually spread by rats which pass the bacteria out in their urine. The bacteria only survives well in moist conditions outside the rat, so dogs which spend a lot of time in water are most at risk. The disease is very serious and can cause jaundice and liver failure and can be spread to people as well as infecting dogs. Vaccination gives very good protection that usually lasts for a year (although dogs at high risk may need to be vaccinated more often).

Kennel cough

Kennel cough is not a serious disease in most otherwise healthy dogs. However, it is very infectious and will rapidly spread around the dog population.

As its name suggests, it causes coughing which can go on for a month in some cases. Good kennels will insist that your dog is vaccinated against this disease before agreeing to take them for boarding. The protection given by the vaccination only lasts for 12 months so most dogs are only vaccinated just before going into

kennels. Kennel cough is caused by a combination of viruses and bacteria.

Rabies

Vaccination against rabies is compulsory in many countries because of the risk of passing this horrible fatal disease to humans. Vaccination is unnecessary for dogs in those countries which are free of rabies - the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan - except in those animals which are going to be exported abroad. Dogs in the UK may now be vaccinated against rabies for travel to some European countries or Rabies-free islands and can return to the UK without having to go through the 6 month quarantine period. Rabies vaccination has to be repeated every 2 or 3 years to maintain protection, but more frequent vaccination may be needed to comply with travelling regulations.



What diseases can my cat be vaccinated against?

Feline Panleucopenia Before the development of a safe vaccine, this was one of the biggest causes of death in cats. It is particularly dangerous for kittens and young cats, when severe vomiting and diarrhoea can cause fatal dehydration within 2-3 days of symptoms starting. The virus is spread in infected faeces (droppings) and it can survive for long periods in the environment.

Cat Flu Nearly all cases of respiratory disease in cats are caused by one of two viruses; herpesvirus and calicivirus. Cat flu is only rarely fatal except in very young or old cats and those which are already ill with some other disease. The effects are the same as in human flu - sneezing, a runny nose and eyes - but mouth ulcers may also occur. Once

infected a cat may carry the virus for a long time and pose a risk to any unvaccinated cat it meets. Cats carrying the virus may not have any symptoms or may have mouth ulcers or 'snotty noses' which never get better. The protection given by vaccination may be short-lived and sometimes your cat may need to be vaccinated at six month intervals.

Feline Leukaemia This is probably the most important viral disease in cats. Not all cats that are infected with the virus get the disease. But, in those that do, it is almost always fatal and treatment can only prolong the cat's life. The disease destroys the cat's defences against other diseases and may cause fatal cancers. The virus is spread by direct contact with other cats. So any cat that goes outside or mixes with other cats is at risk.

Chlamydia This is a disease which causes painful inflammation (conjunctivitis), ulcers and discharge from the eyes. It may cause infertility in some female cats. Young

kittens with the disease may have sore or runny eyes from a few weeks old. It is mainly a problem where large numbers of cats live together and once a cattery is affected, the disease often keeps coming back. Cats living on their own are at low risk of catching the disease. This disease can be treated with a long course of antibiotics.

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vaccinated against rabies for travel to some European countries and can return to the UK with waiver of the 6 month quarantine period under certain prescribed conditions. Contact your vet for details if you plan to travel abroad with your cat.

Ask the vet



Sophie Holden

BVSc MRCVS

My cat gets very anxious coming to the vets, is there anything that can be done to help with this?

Often cats only see their cat carrier if they are about to be taken to the vet, or travelling to a cattery, so often

this is associated with a negative or frightening experience. We advise leaving the carrier out in the house so the cat can see it routinely, even using it as a safe sleeping place so that it can be associated with a positive experience. We would advise positive reinforcement such as feeding small amounts of food in the box, using a nice cuddly blanket in there and either a light spray of Feliway® Classic Spray or having a Feliway® Diffuser Pack 48mls or Pet Remedy® Plug in Diffuser nearby. Cats often feel safer in an elevated position so even placing the carrier on a sturdy table may help.

Unfortunately, we often see large cats placed into too small a carrier which can often lead to anxiety – so we would advise making sure that your cat can comfortably stand and turn around easily. We

comfortably stand and turn around easily. We also see cats brought in without a carrier at all which can lead to extreme anxiety and stress, when faced with new and different noises and stimuli. We would always advise to bring your cat in a carrier, and ideally would recommend each cat having his or her own carrier. We would advise purchasing a carrier that is easily to get the cat in and out of, having a carrier with a detachable hood is ideal, along with a front opening so that if possible the cat can willingly walk in and out of. It is a good idea to remain as calm as possible when preparing your cat for the journey to the vets, as cats are very clever and can pick up on any anxiousness you as an owner may have. If you are running late for your appointment please contact us and we will do our best to rearrange and accommodate you. Practising putting your cat in and out of the carrier at home when you are both calm and relaxed will allow you to refine your technique and also allow your cat to get used to coming in and out of the carrier, using a food reward will help associate this with a positive experience.

Often cats will feel unsafe if the carrier is unsteady, or if exposed to overwhelming stimuli. We would recommend that the carrier is secured within the car with a seat belt (ideally in a back seat so that the passenger air bag does not cause any damage if expanded).

Carriers should be covered with a blanket or towel when carried

Often cats will feel unsafe if the carrier is unsteady, or if exposed to overwhelming stimuli. We would recommend that the carrier is secured within the car with a seat belt (ideally in a back seat so that the passenger air bag does not cause any damage if expanded). Carriers should be covered with a blanket or towel when carried from the car and within the veterinary clinic. We would recommend Feliway® Classic Spray again to provide calming reassurance.

We are registered with the ISFM – International Society of Feline Medicine, which means we do our best to reduce any stress caused by a veterinary visit. At both our Wavertree and Fazakerley practices we have a separate cat waiting area, with Feliway® Diffuser Pack 48mls or Pet Remedy® Plug in Diffuser nearby and freshly washed blankets sprayed with Feliway® Classic Spray available to use. We would recommend placing the carrier on an elevated surface, either on your knee or using our cat carrier shelving system. If your cat is extremely anxious, we would recommend booking an afternoon appointment so we can try to make sure that a consult room is available for your allocated appointment time, so that the cat can be taken straight through into this room. If this is not possible we can take your cat into a quiet room in the back whilst awaiting for your appointment or if it is a cool day we are happy for you to wait with your cat in the car nearby until we are ready for your appointment (please call ahead to let us know you are here, and we can call you back when we are ready). Otherwise we are well set up for our feline furry friends as we have separate cat and dog wards, and we practice gentle cat handling at all times.