

Vaccination in dogs

Why does my dog need vaccinations?

If your dog is not vaccinated, it is at risk of developing a number of severe and possibly fatal diseases, one of which can even be transmitted to humans. Vaccination is the only safe way to provide immunity against all these diseases.

Immunity in Puppies

Immunity is the body's natural ability to fight infection. Puppies are usually protected against many of the infectious diseases for the first few weeks of life by immunity in the mother's first milk (colostrum). However, this immunity rapidly fades leaving the puppy vulnerable to disease within a few weeks. This occurs at different times in different puppies and it is essential that 2 vaccinations are given. The Leptospirosis part of the vaccine for dogs also requires the immune system to be primed by the first injection to give a full level of immunity.

Does my dog really need yearly boosters?

There has recently been discussion in the press as to whether yearly vaccinations are really necessary and although some parts of the vaccine lasts for 3 years; other parts only last for a year. Immunity does not last forever and will gradually fall leaving your pet vulnerable. Every pet responds differently, and our recommendations are based on the minimum period of protection for any animal for the specific vaccine. Major studies have been carried out to determine whether this minimum period can be increased, and occasionally we are able to increase the time interval for certain diseases on recommendation from the authorities. This is especially important for Leptospirosis, as no vaccine will protect your pet fully for more than a year for this disease.

The yearly booster is also an opportunity for the veterinary surgeon to fully examine your pet and discuss any concerns or problems you may have.

When do I vaccinate my puppy?

- 1st vaccination at 8 weeks (some breeders may vaccinate earlier against Parvovirus)
- 2nd vaccination at 10-12 weeks
- Regular boosters every year

What can my dog be vaccinated against?

- **Parvovirus** – Causes depression, bloody diarrhoea, vomiting, and dehydration and can often be fatal in young dogs. Easily spread and survives in the environment for long periods. Remains widespread in the UK.

- **Distemper** – Runny nose and eyes, coughing, vomiting, tiredness, diarrhoea, thick pads, nervous signs, fitting and death in some cases. Treatment is usually not successful. Rare in the UK in recent years but major outbreaks have occurred in Europe.
- **Leptospirosis** (inc. Weil's disease) – Caused by bacteria that are spread in the urine of rats and/or other dogs. Canals and rivers can be contaminated, and forms of the disease are seen across the UK. Can cause severe disease in humans (Weil's disease). Affects the liver or kidneys causing fever, lethargy, jaundice, vomiting and death in some cases.
- **Infectious Canine Hepatitis** – Attacks the liver and can be rapidly fatal. Still exists in the UK, although now rare.

Other Vaccines

- **Kennel cough** – Kennel cough is a highly contagious disease of the respiratory tract that results in a nasty hacking cough (sounding a bit like the whooping cough in people), which can last for several weeks. It is caused by a number of bacteria and viruses including *bordetella* and *canine parainfluenza virus*. It is spread from dog to dog via airborne droplets and nose to nose contact. Dogs are at risk wherever they gather together – kennels, shows, training classes, and the park. Vaccination is by a squirt of vaccine up the nose (no needle!) and lasts for a full year.

NB. Many boarding kennels require the kennel cough vaccination and this vaccination needs to be given at least 7 days prior to the start of their stay (14 days for some kennels). All vaccinations will need to be recorded as many boarding kennels and training classes require proof that your dog is vaccinated. You will be given a vaccination card after your 2nd vaccination, please bring this with you every year to be updated.

- **Rabies** – Rabies vaccinations are needed if you are planning on travelling outside the UK under the pet passport scheme.