



Vaccinations for New Puppies



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



Why are vaccinations important?

Young animals have immature immune systems with limited defenses against viruses and bacteria that are everywhere in the environment. These infectious agents can cause serious problems in young animals and can even be passed to adult dogs in the same household. When puppies are born they derive some temporary immunity through their mothers' milk. By 12 weeks of age this immunity wanes and the puppy needs to form its own protection. By vaccinating our puppies with a weak infection we can prevent them from contracting serious infections. Most vaccinations are used against viral diseases because these diseases are often fatal or severely debilitating and specific antiviral treatments are not readily available, are not highly effective and are often very expensive.

What do we vaccinate against?

Initially puppies should be vaccinated three times at six, nine and twelve weeks of age. They then require a booster annually. The vaccination protocol is designed to satisfy the requirements of most boarding kennels and protects against the following diseases:-

Canine Parvovirus (Parvo)

This causes severe haemorrhagic gastroenteritis; symptoms include:-

- Persistent diarrhoea (often with blood in it)
- Persistent vomiting
- Dehydration
- Depression
- Weight loss

Parvovirus is often fatal and needs intensive medical management. It occurs most commonly in puppies and young dogs and is transferred through exposure to contaminated faeces. The virus survives for long periods in the environment.

Canine Distemper Virus

This virus causes severe respiratory and neurological disease resulting in convulsions which can be fatal. It is most common in young animals. The virus is spread by inhaling infected droplets from sneezes or coughs. Fortunately this is now an uncommon disease in New Zealand.

Infectious Canine Hepatitis

This is caused by Canine Adenovirus 1. Infection results in inflammation of the liver which can be fatal. This disease is also now rare in New Zealand.

Kennel Cough

Kennel Cough results from infection with a number of different agents including Canine Para-influenza Virus, Adenovirus 2 and Bordetella Bronchiseptica. The most common signs are malaise and a highly infectious severe hacking cough (tracheobronchitis) that persists for 10 -14 days. Kennel Cough is spread by inhaling infected droplets from sneezes or coughs and can commonly spread quickly through kennels and animal shelters.



Optional Vaccinations

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that can be passed to humans. In dogs liver and kidney failure may be seen and severe acute infections are often fatal. The disease is transmitted via close contact with an infected animals urine or placenta, by bite wounds or by eating infected material. Humans can contract Leptospirosis through contact with infected dog urine.

Leptospirosis not prevalent in the Wellington – Hutt area, but dogs that travel north of Taupo should be vaccinated. Protection against Leptospirosis requires a series of two injections three weeks apart and can be combined with routine puppy vaccinations. Annual boosters are required to maintain immunity.

Are vaccines safe?

The risk of severe vaccination reactions is generally very low. Some puppies experience mild reactions at the injection site, a small lump may form, which can be mildly painful. Rarely, generalized reactions can occur, the animal may be quiet, lethargic and off its food for twenty four hours after vaccination. If you have any concerns after vaccination then you should contact the clinic.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by exposing the body's immune system to a modified infectious agent. The agent is modified in such a way that it does not cause disease. The immune system produces antibodies against the infectious agent. The body then "remembers" the infectious agent and if it is ever encountered again it can mount a very rapid and strong immune response preventing development of the disease.

Will my dog always be protected?

Vaccination will protect the majority of puppies but in some situations vaccine breakdowns will occur. High levels of maternal antibodies, derived from the mother while suckling, can block the vaccine preventing it from stimulating the immune system. Maternal antibodies usually decline below protective levels after twelve weeks so giving the second vaccination at twelve weeks or older ensures that most vaccinations will take. Some breeds have immune systems that may not respond to vaccination until they are older. These puppies may need an extra booster particularly if there is increased risk of exposure to the disease. Viruses change over time and very virulent strains can cause disease in vaccinated animals. Some puppies can become infected before the vaccination programme commences or may be virus carriers. Vaccination will not work in these puppies.

Generally vaccinations will not give life-long protection. Regular boosters will be required to maintain immunity. Visits to PET-VET for booster vaccinations is an ideal time to give your dog a thorough health check. Often undiagnosed conditions will be identified at these visits.

It is also a good idea to get booster vaccinations if your dog will be exposed to other dogs or stress such as visiting a Boarding kennel.

At PETVET we can provide recommendations on the requirement of booster vaccinations for your dog.

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