

Vaccines

Vaccinations are vitally important to your pet's good health, as they are the key to preventing many diseases. Like many of the breakthroughs in human medicine, effective vaccines have been developed against many deadly viral and bacterial diseases. Vaccines remain an essential cornerstone of preventive health care in both human and veterinary medicine.

Below is a list of recommended vaccines for both dogs and cats, and a specific vaccination schedule to be followed. The actual vaccines administered may be changed to meet your pet's specific needs. Some factors Dr. Leah considers before beginning the vaccination program in you pet include:

1. **AGE.** Most vaccines have limited effectiveness until your pet reaches 6-8 weeks of age, so vaccines given before 6 weeks will require an additional booster.
2. **OVERALL HEALTH.** Poorly nourished or sick animals, or those on some medications may not respond well to vaccination. That's why a physical exam is required. Animals with a prior history of reactions to vaccines may still be vaccinated, but differently.
3. **RISK OF EXPOSURE.** Vaccination against some diseases may not be necessary if the risk of getting them is low.

Using the information gained from the physical exam and from asking you questions about your pet, Dr. Leah will suggest a vaccination program that will help keep your pet healthy.

Common, Dangerous and Preventable Feline Infectious Diseases:

1. **Feline Leukemia.** (FeLV) Many researchers now consider Feline Leukemia virus infection to be the #1 infectious disease causing death in cats. The virus attacks the immune system leaving the cat vulnerable to many other infections, including abscesses and upper respiratory disease. In a small percentage of cats, the virus may cause a certain type of cancer. Cats living in multi-cat households or going outside are at risk for the disease.
2. **Feline Panleukopenia.** Also known as "feline distemper" this is a widespread often-fatal disease. The virus causes signs in the cat including fever, lethargy, vomiting and diarrhea. Unvaccinated cats of all ages are at risk. This disease is often seen in an "epidemic", such as in kittens from an animal shelter, pet stores, or other similar situations.
3. **Upper Respiratory Diseases.** This group includes Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis (FVR), Feline Calicivirus (FVC) and Feline Chlamydiosis. These diseases cause mainly cold and flu-like signs in the cat, ranging from fairly mild to serious enough to cause respiratory failure and death. Cats of any age are susceptible, and are particularly at risk if they are outdoors. These organisms can be picked up on our shoes and clothing and brought inside where they will infect our indoor cats.

Common, Dangerous and Preventable Canine Infectious Diseases:

- 1. Canine Distemper.** Nearly every dog is exposed to distemper in its lifetime, and when infection occurs, it is often fatal. The virus attacks many body organs including the nervous system. Early signs include listlessness, fever, coughing, vomiting and diarrhea. In the final stages, it may cause convulsions and paralysis. Raccoons and coyotes can carry Canine Distemper.
- 2. Parvovirus.** This is a highly contagious, debilitating, and very often-fatal disease, which emerged worldwide in 1978. The virus is shed in feces, usually starting a few days before the dog shows signs of illness. Clinical signs include high fever, listlessness, vomiting and severe diarrhea. The vaccines are very effective; from time to time we see outbreaks of Parvovirus infection, at which time it is advised that all dogs receive a booster vaccination, regardless of when their other vaccines are due.
- 3. Infectious Canine Hepatitis.** This is a viral disease that primarily affects the liver and is spread between dogs by contact with urine, feces or other body fluids such as vomit.
- 4. Canine Coronavirus.** On its own, Coronavirus causes a mild intestinal infection leading to vomiting and diarrhea that is rarely fatal. However, Coronavirus loves to follow along with Parvovirus, and infection with both viruses results in certain death of the dog.

- 5. Canine Cough or Tracheobronchitis.** (Bordetella) This is a complex upper respiratory infection also known commonly as “kennel cough”. Different airborne viruses and bacteria cause the disease. In 1995 there was a serious outbreak of “kennel cough” in the Lower Mainland/ Vancouver, in which several puppies died of pneumonia due to the disease. Since that time we have been including the vaccine with the puppy series, and the number of dogs sick with “kennel cough” have dramatically decrease, as well as the severity of any infection.
- 6. Lyme Disease (Borreliosis).** This is a bacterial infection carried by many species of ticks, including the Deer Tick. Dogs that go hiking or camping with their owners, or that are running through the bush, are at risk for picking up ticks and developing the disease. Signs include lethargy, fever, and shifting leg lameness. Often owners report that their dogs just “aren’t themselves”. There are several effective vaccines available to help prevent Lyme disease, as well as many products effective against the ticks themselves.

Rabies Virus

Rabies is a federally reportable viral disease that affects all mammalian species. In British Columbia we are fortunate that bats are the only know reservoir of the virus in the province - it is estimated that approximately 8% of the bats submitted for testing are positive for

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rabies. All bats should be considered rabid until proven otherwise.

As a veterinarian, Dr. Leah must always consider the human potential for disease as well as the animal risk. Any person bitten, scratched or otherwise directly in contact with a bat or bat secretions should be advised to seek medical attention, as such a person may require rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (vaccination). Bats that have been contacted by a person or found in the house should be safely captured for submission, and the local health unit contacted.

If there is known animal exposure to a bat or other suspected rabid animal, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible for guidance. Dogs or cats not vaccinated for rabies and that are known or suspected of being in contact with a rabid animal are subject to a six-month quarantine, which under most conditions, can be in the owner's home. This quarantine may be reduced to three months if the exposed animal's rabies vaccination is current. These animals should be revaccinated at the time of exposure.

Although the risk of transmission of rabies to dogs and cats from bats appears low, it is a definite concern for human health. Over the past two decades most human rabies deaths due to exposure in North America have been bat related.

Dog Vaccine Schedule

2 months	Distemper/Parvo/Hepatitis/ Corona combo
3 months	Distemper combo (+/- Leptospirosis) + Bordetella + Lyme
4 months	Distemper combo (+/- Leptospirosis) + Lyme + Rabies
16 months (1st annual Booster)	Distemper combo (+/- Leptospirosis) + Lyme + Rabies (then Rabies every 3 years thereafter)

Cat Vaccine Schedule

2 months	Distemper/Parvo/Hepatitis/ Corona combo
3 months	Distemper combo (+/- Leptospirosis) + Bordetella + Lyme
14 months (1st annual Booster)	Panleukopenia-Upper Respiratory combo + Leukemia + Rabies (then Rabies every 3 years thereafter)