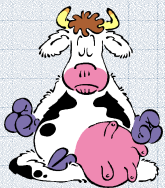


Mountainview Animal Hospital

FALL NEWSLETTER

The bottom Line

Vaccines were first developed in the 1800's, after Sir Edward Jenner noticed that dairy workers exposed to cattle sick with cowpox virus were subsequently protected from the human smallpox disease. He began deliberately exposing humans to the cowpox virus as a means of vaccinating them against the deadly smallpox disease.



Parvovirus was first recognized in 1978 and spread worldwide in one to two years. It devastated the dog population. The virus is very similar to feline panleukopenia virus, so in desperation veterinarians began vaccinating dogs with the cat vaccine. Shortly thereafter a canine vaccine was created against the parvovirus.

VACCINES, FRIEND OR FOE?

Earlier this summer one of my employees purchased a puppy from a rescue group in Quebec. Within hours of picking up her new puppy she began to suspect something was seriously wrong. The puppy became progressively weaker, drooled, vomited and developed diarrhea. By the time I saw the puppy in the morning, he could barely hold his head up, his gums were gray instead of pink, he drooled constantly from nausea, and he was passing a watery, foul smelling, bloody diarrhea. Despite our efforts, he died within a day. The puppy had Parvovirus.

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious viral infection in dogs. It is often fatal; up to 80% of young puppies can die of this disease. The virus causes severe gastrointestinal tract damage. Symptoms include lethargy, severe diarrhea, fever, vomiting, loss of appetite, and dehydration.

Seeing that puppy in such a pitiable state reminded me of my first few years as a veterinarian. Back then parvovirus was rampant. It was not unusual to see several puppies a week die a horrible death from this disease. My worst memory of parvovirus is that of a box of six puppies brought to me by a breeder. Their bodies were limp; they were covered in drool, vomit and bloody diarrhea. The smell was horrible and unforgettable. One body was cold, that puppy had already died. The remaining live puppies whimpered in pain. They were clearly suffering and beyond saving. I picked up each puppy, one by one, and euthanised it. I was so angry because I knew the suffering and death of those puppies could have been prevented had they been vaccinated.

Sadly, I have similarly tragic stories for kittens too. Different diseases, but with the same outcome.

Since those days, the veterinary community has worked hard to educate the public about the importance of vaccinating our pets. This vaccine campaign has worked so well that the younger generation of veterinarians and pet owners have not experience the ravages of infectious disease like we had even fifteen years ago.

Unfortunately, the control over infectious diseases that we have worked so hard to achieve has brought with it a lot of misinformation and complacency about vaccinations and the diseases they have been designed to prevent. I hear media reports and clients talk about how unnecessary vaccines are today, how some of the diseases don't exist anymore and about how dangerous vaccines are.

My employee's dead puppy is a reminder of how dangerous failing to vaccinate can be. Many examples of disease outbreaks have been reported over recent years in unvaccinated pet populations. Similar incidences have even been seen in people, when enough families have not vaccinated their children, supposedly forgotten diseases have had the opportunity to reappear. Unfortunately, the diseases that infect and can kill our dogs and cats are still alive and well, and are just waiting for us to become complacent about our disease prevention protocols.

As a veterinarian, I have a responsibility to balance the needs of the population as well as the need of the individual pet. While I recognize the billions of lives saved by vaccines, I must respect the pet who cannot tolerate the immune stimulation that

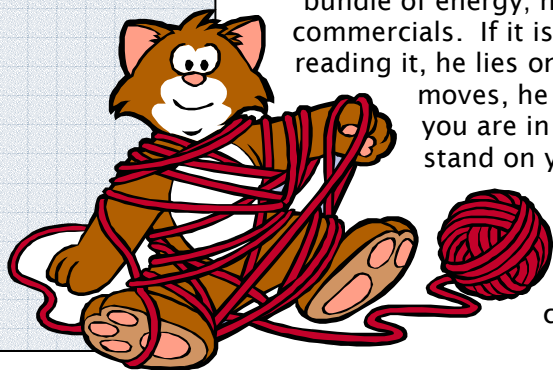
Interesting Facts

Today we split vaccines into core vaccines and non-core vaccines. Core vaccines are those we believe every dog or cat should get regularly, either because of the severity of the disease or the ease of transmission.

Non-core vaccines are selected for individual pets according to their lifestyle and likelihood of exposure.

In dogs, core vaccines are Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza and Rabies. Non-core vaccines are Bordetella (kennel cough), Leptospirosis and Lyme disease.

In cats, core vaccines are Herpesvirus, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia Virus and Rabies. Non-core vaccines are Feline Leukemia Virus, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and Feline Infectious Peritonitis Virus.



vaccines create. Vaccines are not perfect; like any medication, vaccines can cause a negative reaction. Sometimes that reaction can be quite severe. Ideally, a dog or cat that has a severe reaction should no longer be vaccinated. Fortunately, if the population of dogs and cats around that individual are well vaccinated and immune to the various contagious diseases, not vaccinating an individual pet who has a history of vaccine reactions should be safe.

It is also important to select the appropriate vaccines and frequency of vaccination for a pet's life style. Indoor cats for instance, should be vaccinated for feline herpes virus, calici virus, and panleukopenia virus. These viruses are so contagious that humans can carry them into the home on our hands and clothes. Sadly, I see many indoor cats sick with upper respiratory tract infections because their owners falsely believed that indoor cats are not at risk. Feline Leukemia virus on the other hand, need only to be given to cats at risk of direct contact with other cats, generally this means outdoor roaming cats.

Diseases of the immune system have often been blamed on vaccines. While it is easy to blame the vaccine itself, a closer look at the situation has lead us to believe that genetics plays an even more important role in why a dog or cat has an abnormal immune system. The discovery of DNA testing has allowed us to test and track lines of pure bred dogs such as Standard poodles and Cocker spaniels who have had a history of immune mediated diseases. We now understand that certain lines within certain breeds have a genetic abnormality in their immune system. Now that we understand that, it is time for breeders to recognize this association and select healthier breeding lines. As a pet owner, it is wise to avoid purchasing animals from breeders who advise against vaccinating their puppies or kittens because "vaccines make them sick". I would question why that breeder is concerned about the same vaccines that billions of other puppies and kittens tolerate so well.

Giving Fifi or Fido her "shots" during that veterinary appointment sounds so simple and yet it is probably the most complex part of my day. Who should I vaccinate, with what vaccines and how often, runs through my head each and every time I examine an animal.

I believe vaccines have and continue to save billions of human and animal lives. I also believe every pet, even the ones that stay inside, should have a thorough physical examination each and every year. It is during that appointment that we have the opportunity to evaluate each pet's lifestyle and which vaccines are required to keep them healthy and safe.

So, are vaccines a friend or foe? Definitely, a friend and we should not take our friends for granted.

DENIS THE MENACE

We have a new addition to our family. While he is not called Denis, he sure is a menace. Tux, short for tuxedo, is a black kitten with a little white spot on his chest like a bow tie. Dr. Swift is responsible for introducing this adorable little trouble maker to us and I don't know if I should thank her or scold her. Tux is a non stop bundle of energy; he could replace the rabbit in the energizer battery commercials. If it is open, he jumps in it; if it is high, he climbs it; if you are reading it, he lies on it but only for a moment, then he attacks your pen; if it moves, he attacks it; and if it is alive, it should play with him. And if you are in his way, he will climb over you; in fact, it might suite him to stand on your head so he can reach a fluff in the air that is too high to reach any other way. I'm not kidding; he actually jumped up and stood on my head to catch a fluff. When he is finally tired, he sleeps on my chair, just like Nike used to do. We miss her but it is wonderful to have our own, never ending comedy act right here in the hospital.