

KITTY PACK – UNDERSTANDING CAT VACCINATION!

Let's get the whole vaccination issue over once and for all. Let's get the "vaccinate annually", "vaccinate three yearly", "overvaccination", "safe vaccination" stuff over once and for all!

First let's understand the diseases:

Feline Enteritis (Feline Distemper, Feline Panleucopaenia)

This disease can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, pain and dehydration so bad your Kitten can die, or if a cat gets it when they are pregnant they can cause brain damage in the kittens. Go to <http://www.strimoo.com/video/3075968/Feline-Cerebellar-Hypoplasia-Gordon-Youtube.html> to see horrible damage to kittens form this disease. It's caused by a parvovirus similar to dogs.

"Cat Flu" ("Feline Respiratory Disease") and Feline Chlamydia While it doesn't cause too much death, it causes very severe sickness – sneezing, coughing, fever, eyes watering. It's incredibly contagious. Add secondary infection and the poor cat can't eat and can be on antibiotics for ages. Herpesviruses, Caliciviruses, Bordetella, etc.



Thanks to the University of Tokyo for this photo of Cat AIDS

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and Feline Leukaemia virus: Two truly horrible viruses that destroy the immune system of your precious cat, so your cat can't fight regular diseases and can die of ANYthing. In some areas up to 35% of cats have been found to have Leukaemia virus.

SO WE NEED TO VACCINATE TO PROTECT CATS FROM SICKNESS AND DEATH. OK!

SO HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU VACCINATE? (There is no answer to this question!)

Why? BECAUSE OF THE WAY VACCINATION WORKS. Let's look at this with pictures:



this is a cat



this is an antibody



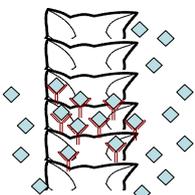
this is a germ



If there are lots of germs in the environment and "Kitty" has no antibodies, chances are she will get sick. If it's a bad germ, "Kitty" can **die**. Maybe she can make his own antibodies fast enough, maybe not. If not, it's death, or sickness and really big vet bills. While she is sick she shoots millions of new germs into the environment, contaminating it.

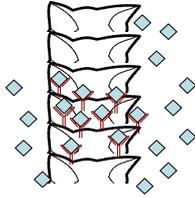


If there aren't so many germs in the environment and "Kitty" has no antibodies, she might get sick or she might not, but she will probably be shooting heaps of germs into the environment, contaminating it. She has a much better chance of making her own antibodies in time to avoid sickness or death.

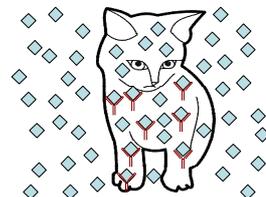


If there are germs in the environment and "Kitty" HAS antibodies from vaccination (or makes her own), then the antibodies attack the germs and kill them. Chances are she won't get sick or die. AND there is less contamination of the environment.

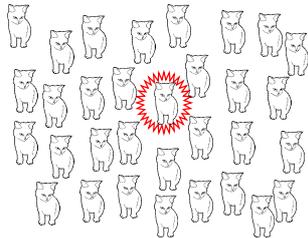
BUT it's a numbers game, because each antibody kills a germ and then gets removed with the germ. Too many germs can overwhelm vaccination and cause mild disease, which is why environmental contamination is important.



Low contamination, enough Antibodies= happy, well cat!



High contamination, not enough Antibodies = "just a bit sick" but contaminates the environment.



If all are vaccinated, the group's protected

There is one other important thing. When most owners vaccinate and give their boosters, the contamination in the **WHOLE** environment is reduced and **ALL** the cats have more protection. That's why we don't see so many cases of feline parvo now. The one cat that "doesn't react" to vaccination is pretty protected because all the others reduced the environmental contamination. Thanks, folks!

SO WHY DO WE VACCINATE OUR PETS?

1. To protect our pets against disease. Vaccination makes lots of antibodies that will withstand most (but not the worst) contaminated environments.
2. To reduce contamination in the environment so protection works better
3. To protect the old, kittens and sick cats by reducing contamination in the environment.

SO, VACCINATION IS A GROUP ACTIVITY, NOT JUST AN INDIVIDUAL ONE.

WHEN YOU VACCINATE YOUR CAT YOU "DO YOUR BIT" FOR THE WHOLE KITTY COMMUNITY!

OK, WE'VE VACCINATED, WHY DO WE HAVE TO GIVE BOOSTERS AT ALL?

We give boosters because once the pet has antibodies, if they are not used they gradually go away.



Straight after a booster



Some time later

The risk of getting the disease depends on how fast "Kitty" loses antibodies – and how many germs are in the environment!

SO HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE GIVE VACCINE BOOSTERS?

Nobody knows. When you should give a booster depends on how nasty and easily transmitted the germ is, AND on how well your cat is, AND how many germs other cats are putting into the environment, AND on whether the germs in the environment have been killed by disinfectants and weather, AND the fraction of the whole kitty population that's been vaccinated. One way to guess is measuring antibodies (titre test), but it's an estimation and can be quite expensive.

What we do know: in Australia, with most owned vaccinated, favourable weather and low environmental contamination, *annual boosters* are often needed to keep “Cat Flu” under control. There is usually plenty of environmental contamination with “Cat Flu” from unowned (ferals) and semi-owned cats, so your precious “Kitty” is often hit with the germs if they play outside.

So what do I do? It’s your decision and we suggest that you get your vet into the discussion, but in the end it’s your call – could you live with yourself if your pet got seriously sick with “Cat Flu”? Are you prepared to be possibly denied entry into some quality pet businesses?

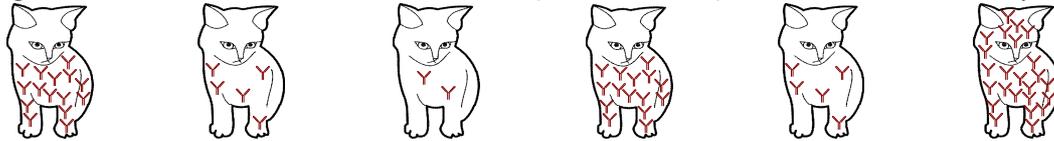
WHY DO QUALITY CATTERIES, GROOMING SALONS, VETS AND “IN HOME” SITTERS DEMAND VACCINATION CERTIFICATES DATED NOT LESS THAN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO ENTRY?

Can you imagine how a quality pet business would *feel* if a cat got sick from their premises? Or if a sick cat contaminated their environment with millions of germs? Can you imagine how hard it would be to protect all the pets in their care *and* remove these germs from their environment?

These businesses “mix” lots of pets - so when they demand recent boosters, they are doing it for your protection. They are being conservative in their disease management and that’s their call, it’s their business and they are trying to protect your pet. You can be pleased that they care so much...

WHEN SHOULD KITTENS BE VACCINATED?

So why don’t all kittens die of disease? Kittens are born without effective antibodies, but their mum gives them antibodies in her “first milk”. BUT kittens don’t suckle the same so they get different numbers of antibodies. These “maternal” antibodies disappear between 8 and 16 weeks of age on average, so kittens have to have real vaccination (or real disease) to boost their immune system.



six kittens in this litter, six completely different “maternal antibody” levels, six different risks of disease...

Two problems:

1. If kittens get the real disease they might die (especially for Parvo and Distemper), so we try to vaccinate them instead.
2. The real vaccination can get “gobbled up” by the antibodies their mum gave them, so we have to try and “manage” the times for vaccination to get maximum protection as soon as those “maternal antibodies” have gone away.

That’s why some vets have different kitten vaccination schedules. Most vets vaccinate at 8 weeks, and 12 weeks old and sometimes 16 weeks as well. ASK your vet about their program.

SIDE ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?

Every medicine has side effects. You take medicines yourself every day that can have side effects. Everybody “knows somebody that knows somebody that had a friend that had a side effect..” BUT finding *real* cases is really rare. Which is better in the end, a possible skin lump or a slow death from Feline AIDS? Links with autoimmune disease, sarcomas and other genuine side effects are rare and most can be managed with less cost than the cost of the disease. Take your vet’s advice.

FINALLY, WHAT ABOUT HOMEOPATHIC VACCINATION, “NOSODES” AND “NATURAL” PRODUCTS?

Products used on pets are registered with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). These highly qualified experts insist that products be safe, effective and have limited side effects before registration. ASK! If it’s registered with the APVMA, it’s more than likely to be OK and have minimal side effects that are constantly monitored by the regulator.