

Canine Vaccinations



Many of the major infectious diseases affecting dogs can easily and painlessly be controlled by vaccination. A small dose of a harmless form of the infection is used to stimulate the body to build up an immunity, and if this infection is encountered in the future, there will be sufficient resistance to overcome it before it can cause harm.

Your dog will be exposed to several infectious canine diseases in the course of his normal life, including distemper, viral hepatitis, parvovirus, leptospirosis and tracheobronchitis. Fortunately, a comprehensive vaccination programme, with annual booster injections to top up immunity will offer them effective protection.

Distemper (hard pad)

Distemper has a long incubation period of about 3 weeks, although thankfully, due to vaccination, it is becoming less common. Initial symptoms include discharge of pus from the eyes and nose, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, coughing and nervous signs, including fits. The foot pads may also become hard and cracked. Distemper can be fatal, and surviving dogs can be left with permanent twitching or epileptic fits.

Hepatitis

Primarily affecting the liver, symptoms range from being a little off-colour, to sudden death. On average, the illness lasts 2 - 7 days and the patient is very depressed with a high fever along with vomiting and diarrhoea. During the recovery stage, some dogs develop a hazy blue colouration of the eye, but this usually clears with time.

Parvovirus

First recognised in the late 1970's, parvovirus reached epidemic level and killed many dogs before a vaccine was developed. There are still occasional outbreaks among unvaccinated dogs, especially in densely populated towns. In very young pups, the heart muscle is attacked, leading to sudden death or life-long heart problems in survivors. Older dogs suffer acute vomiting and diarrhoea, often bloody and with a characteristic pungent odour.

Leptospirosis

There are two forms of this disease; one is carried by rats and spread through the urine, causing damage to the liver and kidneys and severe jaundice. It can be transmitted to humans fairly readily where it is known as Weil's disease. The other is spread through the urine of infected dogs, and is much less likely to infect humans. This form is more common amongst urban dogs and causes inflammation of the kidneys.



Tracheobronchitis

Often known as 'kennel cough', this respiratory ailment is readily spread between dogs, especially when they are grouped together as at shows, training classes or boarding kennels. However, as it is an air-borne infection, even dogs that never leave the garden can be affected. The disease affects the delicate lining of the airways leading to a harsh cough, distressing to both patient and owner.

Vaccinations

Maternal antibodies, passed in the milk from a vaccinated bitch to her puppies, provide vital protection during the vulnerable first few weeks of life. However, when the pups reach 8 - 10 weeks old, this protection begins to wane and therefore it is vital to vaccinate at this point, so that the pup begins to build up its own immunity.

A second vaccination given two weeks later continues that protection for a year, and thereafter, annual boosters are required.

Until your puppy has completed its initial double vaccination course, keep them away from contact with other dogs and restrict access to areas frequently visited by dogs.

Try to keep your pup in the house or garden, and when you visit the surgery, they should sit on your knee or stay in the car until you are called.

Suggested vaccination programme for puppies:

- first vaccination at 8-10 weeks
- second vaccination at 10-12 weeks
- yearly boosters thereafter

Suggested programme for adults:

- annual boosters
- annual protection against tracheobronchitis via nasal drops

Can my pregnant bitch be vaccinated?

Although breeding bitches need good levels of antibodies to pass on to puppies, it is not advisable to vaccinate a pregnant bitch. Instead, when contemplating breeding, try to ensure that a booster is given shortly before mating.

Keeping up to date with boosters is vital if you want to keep your pet in good shape. Current prices for all vaccinations and boosters are available at reception and on our website.

If you need any further information or advice, then please just ask any of our staff and we will be pleased to help.

