



Important Information for Dog Owners

Vaccination Update - July 2010*

The recently revised World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) 2010 Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats define **core** vaccines as those “which ALL dogs and cats, regardless of circumstances, should receive. **Core** vaccines protect animals from severe, life-threatening diseases which have global distribution.” **Core** vaccines for dogs are those that protect from canine distemper virus (CDV), canine adenovirus (CAV) and canine parvovirus (CPV). The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines Fact Sheets note that the modified live virus (MLV) **core** vaccines for dogs have a **demonstrated duration of immunity of nine years or longer**.

Veterinary immunology experts advise that vaccination for the serious viral diseases is only necessary for puppies, (with the final puppy vaccination around 14-16 weeks). **Duration of immunity is likely to be life-long** (similar to measles vaccination for humans), **so repeated re-vaccination of adult dogs for these diseases needlessly places the animal at risk of an adverse reaction for no demonstrable benefit**.

Speaking at the WSAVA Congress in Geneva in June 2010, Professor Michael Day, Chairman of the WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group, stated that **“in reality, a dog that is appropriately immunized as a pup probably never requires another core vaccine during its lifetime”** and advised: *“If the owner is in any doubt as to whether the animal is protected against the core vaccine-preventable diseases, then serological testing [also known as antibody titre testing] may be used to allay any fears. The presence of any titre of antibody to CDV, CAV and CPV is indicative of protection.”*

If a dog's **core** vaccination status is unknown, concerned pet owners can choose to have titre testing to verify their pet's antibody status, or a vaccination. The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats note that: **“The principles of ‘evidence-based veterinary medicine’ would dictate that testing for antibody status (for either pups or adult dogs) is better practice than simply administering a vaccination”**.

The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines advise: *“We should aim to vaccinate every animal with **core** vaccines, and to vaccinate each individual less frequently by only giving **non-core** vaccines that are necessary for that animal”*. The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines also warn: **“Vaccines should not be given needlessly...We should aim to reduce the ‘vaccine load’ on individual animals in order to minimize the potential for adverse reactions to vaccine products”**.

The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines advise that **non-core** vaccination *“is determined on the basis of the animal's geographical and lifestyle exposure and an assessment of risk-benefit ratios”*. Vaccination with **non-core** vaccines only need be considered in individual cases for less serious diseases and less prevalent diseases (e.g. canine respiratory complex and Leptospira). **Non-core** vaccines containing bacterial antigens have limited efficacy and dubious safety. The risks and benefits of **non-core** vaccines should be carefully considered by the pet owner before administration. In many cases, these vaccine products may not be beneficial for the individual animal. (Refer to the WSAVA 2010 Guidelines for more information on **core** and **non-core** vaccines.)

Unproven vaccine manufacturers' revaccination recommendations on **core** vaccine product labels have not kept up to date with the scientific evidence on long duration of immunity and vaccination 'best practice'. In its Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats, the Australian government regulator, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

(APVMA), has admitted its failure to ensure evidence based regulation of vaccine products, now acknowledging that it **“does not support the retention of label statements that direct or imply a universal need for life-long annual revaccination with core vaccines”**.

The APVMA's Position Statement notes that: **“Veterinarians and pet owners are under no obligation to follow revaccination intervals recommended on vaccine labels...veterinarians may therefore use vaccines at whatever interval they (and the client) determine is best for each particular animal.”** The APVMA is currently working with vaccine manufacturers to amend vaccine product labels.

The APVMA's Position Statement acknowledges that **“the aim should be to ensure that all susceptible animals are vaccinated, rather than that already well-immunised animals are re-vaccinated”**, and notes that **“veterinarians should provide pet owners with pertinent, up-to-date information on vaccination best practice....It is important that veterinarians tailor vaccination regimens to suit the needs of each animal under their care, and discuss alternatives with their client”**.

The APVMA's Position Statement and the APVMA's **“Community Question: Does my dog or cat need to be vaccinated every year?”** are accessible on the APVMA's website. Unfortunately, there has been little effort by the APVMA to publicise this information, and the public is still largely unaware of the latest scientific advice on pet vaccination 'best practice'.

Similarly, despite international guidelines on pet vaccination being available for many years, the Australian Veterinary Association has also failed to clearly communicate the need to reduce vaccination of pets to the public, and many veterinarians continue to urge pet owners to have their pets revaccinated unnecessarily. **This practice constitutes over-servicing, and needlessly places pets at risk of an adverse reaction to vaccine products for no demonstrable benefit. In many instances, pet owners are not being given the opportunity to objectively consider important information in the latest international vaccination guidelines, and their 'informed consent' is not being obtained before revaccination of pets.**

This unacceptable coercive veterinary practice has been brought to the attention of the Federal Minister responsible for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, Tony Burke, and the Federal Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, Craig Emerson. **These Ministers have been requested to take urgent action to effectively regulate the currently unregulated veterinary profession, and to protect pet owners and their pets from over-servicing and unacceptable veterinary practice.**

Note: The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines have been published in the June 2010 issue of the Journal of Small Animal Practice. The WSAVA 2010 Guidelines and Fact Sheets are freely accessible on the WSAVA website in the section titled 'WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group': <http://www.wsava.org/VGG1.htm>
Direct link to the WSAVA 2010 Guidelines: <http://www.wsava.org/PDF/Misc/VaccinationGuidelines2010.pdf>

* This statement has been prepared by Elizabeth Hart for the international campaign against unnecessary, and possibly harmful, vaccination of pets. (Email: elizmhart@gmail.com)

References:

¹ Schultz, R.D., Thiel, B., Mukhtar, E., Sharp, P., Larson, L.J. (2010). Age and long-term protective immunity in dogs and cats. J. Comp. Path. 142, S102-S108.

² Day, M.J. How I Vaccinate an Animal with Previous History of Adverse Reaction. 35th World Small Animal Veterinary Association 2010 WSAVA Congress, Geneva, June 2-5 2010:

<http://www.vin.com/proceedings/Proceedings.plx?CID=WSAVA2010&Category=&PID=56260&O=Generic>

³ Day M.J., Horzinek, M.C., Schultz, R.D. World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats. Journal of Small Animal Practice. Volume 51 Issue 6 (June 2010). (p 338-356). Direct link to the WSAVA 2010 Guidelines and Fact Sheets: <http://www.wsava.org/PDF/Misc/VaccinationGuidelines2010.pdf>

⁴ Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats. Published 21 January 2010, revised 25 January 2010:

http://www.apvma.gov.au/news_media/news/2010/2010-01-21_vaccination_position.php

⁵ APVMA Community Question: Does my dog or cat need to be vaccinated every year? 7 June 2010:

http://www.apvma.gov.au/news_media/community/vaccination_dogs_cats.php