

Over-vaccination of pets – an unethical practice

Over-vaccination of companion animals, and exploitation of pet owners, is big business, worth billions of dollars on an international basis.



In Australia, pet owners Bea Mies and Elizabeth Hart have been campaigning for ethical and evidence-based vaccination of companion animals. As a result of their persistence, change is slowly happening in companion animal vaccination practice. It is a disgrace that members of the public have to be the leaders for change due to the failure of self-interested experts/professionals in the veterinary vaccine industry.

Elizabeth Hart's essay "[Over-vaccination of pets – an unethical practice](#)" provides some background on this subject. The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) announced a new reduced vaccination policy¹ soon after Elizabeth's essay was widely circulated in June 2009. (After demands from dissenting AVA members, the AVA's vaccination policy was subsequently downgraded to a [position statement](#) in July 2011).²

In January 2010, the government regulator of veterinary vaccines, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), issued a [position statement](#) on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats, acknowledging matters of concern in regard to re-vaccination intervals. State veterinary boards in Australia subsequently blatantly disregarded the [APVMA's request](#) for the APVMA's Position Statement to be circulated to veterinarians in Australia.

In August 2010, *CHOICE*, Australia's consumer watchdog, published its report on over-vaccination of pets i.e. "[Pet vaccination: Over-vaccinating your pet could be harmful to their health as well as your own hip pocket](#)". The ABC also reported on this story i.e. [Questions raised over pet vaccination](#), broadcast in October 2010.

In May 2011, specialist dog breeder magazine, *National Dog*, published Elizabeth's article "[Vaccination failure!](#)" which warns there is a potential for maternally derived antibodies (MDA) to interfere with a puppy's response to core vaccination, and calls upon the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's (WSAVA) Vaccination Guidelines Group to provide clear and objective advice on optimal puppy vaccination, and an optional titre test confirmation protocol.

In February 2012, [Bea Mies addressed the industry sponsored WSAVA Guidelines for the Owners and Breeders](#) of Dogs and Cats, arguing that advice to pet owners contradicts scientific findings published elsewhere.

Bea's [latest email to Professor Michael Day](#), Chairperson of the WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group, and Sarah Mitchell of Pfizer Animal Health, provides critical analysis of their Canvac vaccine study paper, recently published in the December 2012 edition of the Australian Veterinary Journal³. Bea argues their paper is **the latest instalment of willfully misleading and ethically dubious veterinary education on canine vaccination**.

Elizabeth supported Bea's recent email to Michael Day and Pfizer Animal Health (January 2013) [with a call to the industry-funded WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group](#) to publicly provide an objective, simple and effective message on vaccination to pet owners.

For more background re over-vaccination of pets see below articles, correspondence, submissions etc:

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- [The Australian campaign for ethical and evidence-based vaccination of companion animals \(February 2012\)](#)
- [Email to Senator Joe Ludwig, Minister responsible for the APVMA \(26 November 2011\)](#), complaining about the failure of 'self-regulation' of veterinarians.

¹ The Australian Veterinary Association's policy on vaccination of dogs and cats was ratified by the AVA Board on 26 June 2009.

² "Position Statements are chosen when the AVA membership has conflicting views on the topic which is particularly the case with duration of immunity and there was lack of agreement with the document produced." E-ructations, AVA NSW Division Newsletter, Issue 26 May 2011.

³ SA Mitchell, RJ Zwijnenberg, J Huang, A Hodge and MJ Day. Duration of serological response to canine parvovirus-type 2, canine distemper virus, canine adenovirus type 1 and canine parainfluenza virus in client-owned dogs in Australia. AVJ Vol. 90, No. 12, December 2012.

- [A Submission to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons \(24 June 2011\)](#), on the Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons.
- [Email to Anna-Maria Brady, UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate \(23 June 2011\)](#) requesting evidence to support the veterinary industry's call for revaccination of pets.
- [Vaccination failure!](#) There is a potential for maternally derived antibodies (MDA) to interfere with a puppy's response to core vaccination. (Article published in the May 2011 edition of National Dog).
- [Email to Australian Veterinary Boards \(19 May 2011\)](#) enquiring if the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats had been circulated to veterinarians, as requested by the APVMA in September 2010.
- [Email to Anna-Maria Brady, UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate \(15 May 2011\)](#) with questions re core vaccine product labelling in regards to duration of immunity.
- [Email to James Suter, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(20 April 2011\)](#) with further questions re the APVMA's responses to adverse experience reports being marked 'COMMERCIAL-IN-CONFIDENCE'.
- [Email to Anna-Maria Brady, UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate \(1 April 2011\)](#) providing a pet owner's perspective on pet vaccination.
- [Open letter to Barry Smyth, President of the Australian Veterinary Association](#) ; Peter Punch, Chair of the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council; Eva Bennet-Jenkins, CEO, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (26 March 2011): A formal complaint re the continuing calls for already immune animals to be needlessly, and possibly harmfully, revaccinated.
- [Examples of reports in the Australian media about parvovirus outbreaks](#) during the period Dec 2009 to March 2011.
- [Email to James Suter, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(6 March 2011\)](#) "Request for information re adverse experience reporting / possible conflicts of interest".
- [Email to Mark Kelman, Virbac / Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association \(7 February 2011\)](#) re further questions about the Virbac Disease WatchDog
- [Email to Allen Bryce, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(31 January 2011\)](#) re adverse experiences after vaccination
- [Email to Mark Kelman, Virbac / Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association \(26 January 2011\)](#) re alarming statistics regarding parvovirus and the Virbac Disease WatchDog.
- [Media reports re over-vaccination of pets in Australia August –October 2010](#)
- [Open letter to the veterinary profession and industry \(9 August 2010\)](#) re use of the media to promote over-servicing in the veterinary profession- unnecessary, and possibly harmful, vaccination of companion animals.
- [Email to Mark Kelman, Virbac / Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association \(31 July 2010\)](#), re canine vaccination protocols.
- [Important Information for Dog Owners – Vaccination Update July 2010](#) (an earlier version of this article was also published in National Dog Volume 13, No. 6).
- [Email to Aine Seavers, veterinarian \(24 July 2010\)](#), re canine 3-year vaccination intervals.
- [Letter to Craig Emerson MP \(4 July 2010\)](#), Federal Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs re submission on the Consumer Voices Issues Paper: "Request for consumer protection for consumers of veterinary services in Australia".
- [Response to Allen Bryce \(23 June 2010\)](#), Program Manager, Veterinary Medicines, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority re unnecessary, and possibly harmful, vaccination of companion animals, and the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats.
- [Letter to Tony Burke MP \(17 June 2010\)](#), Federal Minister responsible for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, re unnecessary, and possibly harmful, vaccination of companion animals, and the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats (17 June 2010).

- [Open letter to Allen Bryce \(17 June 2010\)](#), Program Manager, Veterinary Medicines, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority re unnecessary, and possibly harmful vaccination of companion animals, and the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats.
- [Letter to the Editor of The Veterinarian magazine \(8 June 2010\)](#), response to Aine Seavers' article "Three-year vaccination intervals: a different view from the parvo trenches of practice-land".
- [Letter to the Editor of The Veterinarian magazine \(7 June 2010\)](#): 'A pet owner's perspective of the vaccination controversy'.
- [Open letter to Mark Lawrie \(May 2010\)](#) (Immediate Past) President of the Australian Veterinary Association re over-servicing in the veterinary profession – unnecessary, and possibly harmful, vaccination of companion animals (6 May 2010, with an update added on pages 3-4 on 23 May 2010).
- [Too many needles ! Unnecessary vaccination exposed](#) (February 2010, article published in National Dog in April 2010).
- [A Submission on the National Scheme](#) for Assessment, Registration and Control of Use of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Discussion Paper in relation to "Unnecessary, and Possibly Harmful, Use of Companion Animal Vaccines" (10 February 2010).
- [Open letter to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(24 January 2010\)](#), Australian Veterinary Association, Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association, and Competition and Consumer Policy Division, The Treasury re unnecessary vaccination of pets and the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats.
- [Open letter to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(8 January 2010\)](#), Australian Veterinary Association and Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association re unnecessary vaccination of pets and the APVMA's Position Statement on Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats.
- [Open letter to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority \(22 December 2009\)](#), Australian Veterinary Association and Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association re over-vaccination of pets / APVMA Position Statement / vaccine product labelling issues.
- [The over-vaccination controversy continues](#) (article published in National Dog in December 2009).
- [Results of a random mini-survey](#) of Adelaide veterinary surgeries' vaccination practice for adult dogs (September 2009).
- [Submission to Craig Emerson MP \(17 July 2009\)](#), Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, on the Consumer Voices Issues Paper: "Request for consumer protection for consumers of veterinary services in Australia".
- [Over-vaccination: Are vets making our pets sick?](#) (June 2009, article published in National Dog in July 2009).
- [Over-vaccination of pets – an unethical practice](#) (16 June 2009). This fully-referenced paper is a summary of my 'over-vaccination' report dated 13 April 2009 with additional information.
- [Is over-vaccination harming our pets? Are vets making our pets sick?](#) (13 April 2009). This detailed and fully-referenced report was tabled at a special meeting convened by the APVMA on 15 April 2009 to discuss the problem of unnecessary vaccination of pets.

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