

Fact Sheet **D01**



# Vaccination for your dog



### **Why have your dog vaccinated?**

Unless properly vaccinated, your dog runs the risk of contracting one of several possibly fatal infectious diseases. parvovirus and distemper probably represent the most widespread threat, but it is also necessary to protect against hepatitis and leptospirosis. Some hepatitis vaccines can also protect against a virus implicated in the 'Kennel Cough' syndrome. In addition, vaccines are also available to protect against parainfluenza and bordetella bronchiseptica, also involved in 'Kennel Cough'.

### **Immunity**

#### **What is immunity?**

If an animal (or person) is immune to a particular disease it means that there is little or no risk of falling ill to that disease. Immunity in an adult dog may be as a result of either regular vaccination or the dog having suffered (and survived) the disease.

#### **What about immunity in puppies?**

Provided that the mother is immune, puppies are usually protected for the first few weeks of life by the immunity passed in their mother's first milk. However, the immunity falls with time leaving the puppies susceptible to infectious diseases. Vaccinations at this point simply take over the mother's role in providing protection.

### **Vaccines**

Modern vaccines are the product of extensive research, and work by injecting a small amount of a substance that stimulates the dog's own immune system to a particular disease.



This may be viral particles that have been killed or part of a virus that is able to stimulate immunity, but a vaccine is only of value if given to a healthy animal as prevention against infection. It is of very little benefit if given to an animal after exposure to an infection. These vaccines are manufactured to the same standards as those demanded for the production of vaccines for human use. With such safe and effective vaccines readily available, it makes sense to protect your dog at the earliest opportunity.

## Canine Parvovirus

Canine parvovirus is a small but extremely hardy virus that can survive in the environment for long periods. The disease first emerged in the 1970s as an epidemic, killing many thousands of dogs before effective vaccination became available. The main source of infection is the faeces of infected dogs; the virus can also be spread on shoes and clothing and on the coat and pads of dogs.

Originally two forms of the disease were seen: heart disease (in young puppies) and enteritis. Now, heart disease is rarely seen, as most young puppies are protected by virtue of immunity passed in their mother's first milk. Enteritis is seen in any age of dog from about four weeks of age, but most commonly in dogs less than one year old. Signs appear quickly and usually consist of depression, severe vomiting, refusal of food and water, abdominal pain and profuse smelly, bloody diarrhoea. This can result in rapid and severe dehydration leading to death.

Although no longer present in epidemic proportions due to successful vaccination, 'Parvo' is still commonly seen in unvaccinated dogs.

**Vaccination and annual boosters are vital to protect against this disease.**

## Canine Distemper

Whilst vaccination has resulted in a decrease in the incidence of this disease in recent years, many pockets of infection still exist, especially in large cities, which result in regular local outbreaks. The main source of infection is by inhalation during close dog to dog contact. The signs of the disease may take up to three weeks to appear. Dogs less than one year of age are most commonly affected.

Typically, the first signs are runny nose and eyes with coughing and vomiting, followed by unusual tiredness, lack of appetite and diarrhoea. After several weeks there may also be a thickening of the pads and nervous signs, including paralysis, twitching or even fits. Dogs that survive may suffer from deformed teeth or even develop nervous signs later in life.

Treatment of canine distemper is often unsuccessful - vaccination is the best form of protection.

## Infectious Canine Hepatitis

*(Canine Adenovirus, Canine Viral Hepatitis, Rubarth's Disease)*

Canine hepatitis, which mainly attacks the liver, can rapidly be fatal. Transmission is by close dog to dog contact; dogs recovering from the disease may be a source of infection for more than 6 months. Dogs are most commonly affected in the first year of life, but all ages are susceptible.

Early signs include general discomfort and lack of appetite, very high temperature, pale gums and conjunctiva, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Subsequently, the dog may develop jaundice. In some dogs that recover, a clouding of the cornea, known as 'blue eye', occurs which will usually resolve. Canine adenovirus type 2 vaccines provide good immunity against infectious canine hepatitis and also one of the components of 'Kennel Cough' syndrome.



## Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is caused by bacteria that are spread in the urine of infected animals. It can spread to humans by skin contact with infected urine. Two forms of disease are seen:

### Leptospira Icterhaemorrhagiae

*(Weils Disease)*

This is caught from rats, most commonly via contact with infected urine or rat-infested water. The liver is the main organ affected, although the kidneys may be involved. Signs are usually a high temperature, severe thirst, lethargy, increased urination, abdominal pain, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea and jaundice. Death can occur within a few hours in severe cases.

### Leptospira Canicola

This is caught from the infected urine of other dogs. Milder signs are often seen with the kidneys being the main organs affected; jaundice is seen less often and is less severe. However, damage to the kidneys may cause problems later in life. Dogs that recover can excrete the bacteria in their urine for up to a year and thus be a source of further infection.

**Annual vaccinations are vital to protect your dog and prevent it becoming a source of infection to humans.**

## **Kennel Cough Syndrome**

*(Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis)*

'Kennel Cough' is an infectious disease that, as the name implies, can be picked up especially when dogs stay in boarding kennels. It can mean coming home to a distressed dog, whose coughing will undo all the good of your relaxing holiday. 'Kennel Cough' represents a serious problem for kennels and, as a result, more and more are insisting on full vaccination cover for all dogs in their care.

Although there are other organisms which can cause 'Kennel Cough', infection with *bordetella bronchiseptica* can lead to a persistent hacking cough that lasts for several weeks. Dogs can pick up *bordetella* anywhere, it doesn't have to be in kennels. The infection spreads from dog to dog through the air and dogs are just as likely to catch 'Kennel Cough' at shows, training classes or wherever dogs are grouped together.

Fortunately your dog can be given a vaccine which provides solid protection against *bordetella* infection and can be given on its own or at the same time as your dog's annual booster against distemper, viral hepatitis, leptospirosis and parvovirus.

The vaccine is given as nose drops and is effective in as little as five days, although the best time to have this vaccination is two weeks before your dog goes into kennels or to a show.

## **Rabies**

This disease is not present in the UK but vaccination is compulsory for dogs travelling abroad on the 'Pet Passport' or for export. Dogs have to be microchipped before a rabies vaccine is given. Please ask for more information if you wish to travel with your dog abroad.



## **When should your dog be vaccinated?**

### **Primary vaccination**

Puppies may start their vaccination course as early as 8 weeks of age. If you acquire or have an older puppy or adult dog that is unvaccinated or has an unknown vaccination history, please book it in for its vaccinations straight away. This allows your new pet to have a general check-up. Remember that the protective effects of vaccination are not immediate and the vet will advise when your puppy may be taken out for walks safely. It is important that your puppy socialises with other dogs and people early in life to avoid behavioural problems later.

### **Booster vaccinations**

Immunity to these diseases does not last indefinitely and will gradually fall, leaving your dog at risk. Annual boosters are vital to maintain the immunity which will protect your dog from these infections and provide an opportunity for a yearly health check by the vet.

### **Record of vaccination**

On completion of your dog's primary course, you will be given a record card providing a record of vaccination and advising when the next booster is due. Boarding kennels and training classes will almost certainly require this before accepting your dog. Remember to bring this document with you to the surgery each time your dog has vaccinations so that it can be updated.

*For further information please ask at reception.*