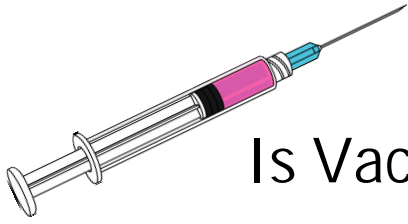




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# Is Vaccination Important for dogs?



## Why vaccination is important:

Every year many dogs of all ages become seriously ill or die from infectious diseases which could have been prevented through vaccination. Vaccines are routinely used for canine distemper, parvovirus, leptospirosis, infectious canine hepatitis and kennel cough because the micro-organisms that cause these diseases are widespread in the UK population. All unvaccinated dogs are at risk since there is no specific treatment for viral diseases.

## How vaccines work:

Vaccines stimulate the body's defence system to produce protective antibodies and cells in the blood. These protect against specific diseases. This protection is called immunity. Unfortunately this does not last for life and booster vaccinations are required to maintain the immunity produced by the initial course of vaccinations.

## Dog diseases explained:

### Canine Distemper



Canine distemper often causes death or permanent disability and occurs most frequently in young, unvaccinated puppies. The disease is usually caught through direct contact with an infected dog, often beginning with high temperature, runny eyes and nose, a dry cough and diarrhoea. Dehydration, weight loss and nervous signs may follow. Distemper is the most serious disease of dogs because the chances of survival are poor and dogs that survive often have nervous signs such as fits.

### Canine Parvovirus

Canine parvovirus first appeared in the late 1970s as an epidemic which caused many deaths. Spread through contact with an infected dog or its faeces, the virus can survive in the environment for many months. This means that it can be transported on shoes and other objects so that even puppies that have been kept indoors, away from other dogs, may be at risk. Dogs of all ages can be affected but it is often fatal in young dogs causing sudden onset of sickness, fever and severe, bloody diarrhoea.

### Infectious Canine Hepatitis

ICH is a very contagious viral disease spread through contact with infected dogs. ICH mainly causes liver damage although it can also cause respiratory infections. In severe cases death often occurs rapidly after diagnosis leaving little time for treatment. In addition to providing protection, vaccination helps minimise the spread of disease because

those dogs who do survive infection can become symptomless carriers, posing a risk to unvaccinated dogs.

### Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that primarily affects the liver and kidneys. The disease is mainly spread through contact with infected urine, e.g. at a lamp-post! A severe case can be fatal, or can cause permanent kidney damage which may lead to disability and death later in life. Leptospirosis can be passed to humans.

### Kennel Cough

Kennel cough commonly occurs when dogs are brought together in groups, e.g. at dog shows. Caused by many agents, either alone or in combination, kennel cough is not usually life threatening, generally causing an uncomfortable harsh, dry cough and possibly a nasal discharge. The condition may last for several weeks.

## Why you need to vaccinate your dog regularly:

### Primary vaccination

During the first weeks after birth antibodies in the mother's milk protect a puppy against disease. This maternal immunity gradually decreases leaving your puppy no longer protected. When your new puppy arrives contact the veterinary hospital for advice on when to start vaccinations. We will advise you of the vaccinations your puppy will require and when it is safe to let your puppy outside allowing it to mix with other dogs. When the vaccination course is completed you will be given a signed vaccination certificate. This is an important document and is essential for your dog to enter training classes, shows and boarding kennels.

### Annual health check and vaccination

Initial vaccine protection does not last for life so it is crucial to take your dog to the veterinary hospital every year for booster vaccinations. An annual health check is an important part of maintaining the health of your dog. At this time we will advise you of the vaccinations your dog requires for continued protection against infectious diseases and you also have an opportunity to discuss any other requirements for a healthy, happy dog. The date you should return your dog for an annual health check and booster vaccinations should be recorded in your vaccination certificate.

### Boarding your dog whilst on holiday

You must have an up-to-date vaccination certificate if you intend to board your dog in a kennel while you are on holiday. You should allow at least 2 weeks between the date of final vaccination and entry into the kennels to allow the vaccine time to work. If your adult dog has missed its booster or has not been vaccinated as a puppy, a primary vaccination course to achieve full protection may be necessary.

If you are in any doubt as to the vaccination status of your dog, or have any questions about vaccination, simply consult us for advice.