

ANNUAL TO TRIENNIAL VACCINATIONS

WHAT IS THE STORY

Annual to Triennial Vaccines – What is the Story?

I am sure many of you will be aware the topic of frequency of re-vaccination schedules is attracting a great deal of discussion at present. Indeed some of you, like myself, may be working in clinics and practices that have decided to follow the example of a large proportion of the American Veterinary Schools and move from annual re-vaccination against "core" infectious diseases to triennial revaccination programmes.

While we as veterinary nurses are not responsible for the decisions as to which side of the fence our practice decides to sit regarding this topic it is vital that we are suitably informed so that we can answer the increasing number of questions we are going to field about this subject from our clients and customers.

There is an abundance of relevant material in the veterinary scientific literature; but also in NZ animal-related magazines and available via the Internet. Since some of the latter material is provocative (and, in places, misleading) breeders and pet owners in New Zealand are raising the subject during veterinary consultations with increasing frequency.

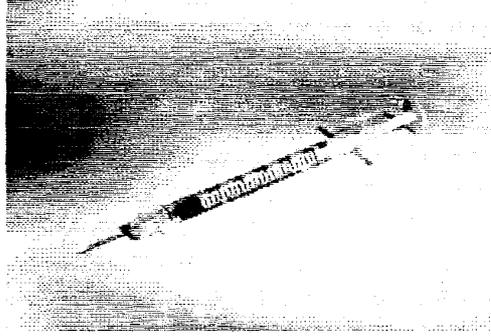
As veterinary nurses we should ensure we are equipped to help answer our customers inquiries in an educated and informed manner while still ensuring we follow the guidelines our employers wish to put in place regarding this contentious issue.

Background to the changes

In this discussion I will refer to "core" viruses which are parvovirus, infectious canine hepatitis virus and distemper virus for dogs, and panleukopenia virus, herpesvirus, and calicivirus for cats, and "non-core" infectious agents being leptospira, Bordetella bronchiseptica, parinfluenza virus, chlamydia and feline leukaemia virus.

An increasing number of veterinarians and veterinary teaching institutions around the world are coming to the consensus that a strategy of triennial vaccinations against the core viruses listed above makes more clinical sense to them than annual revaccination.

A growing amount of scientific evidence shows that the immunity provided against these core diseases through the appropriate use of modern vaccines far exceeds a one year period, and in some cases may last for the entire life of the pet. The decision to re-vaccinate triennially is to ensure that a sufficient margin of safety is provided.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

Another point of concern that supports the move to triennial vaccination is the infrequent but severe occurrences of vaccine-related complications in cats and dogs.

The issues above do not detract from the absolute need to vaccinate puppies and kittens thoroughly and effectively.

Questions you might be asked and answer you **MIGHT** give:

If your clinic is only going to vaccinate my pet once every three years does that mean my pet is getting "less" care that it used to?

"Absolutely not, although we are very confident that we will be providing you pet with excellent safe guards against the potentially fatal diseases we vaccinate against we still highly recommend that you

visit us each year for you pet to have a through health check each year. Bringing you pet in for a health check each year is like us going for a check-up every five years to make sure there are no potential problems lurking beneath the surface that we can recognize and treat before they affect you pets state of well-being"

Why has my neighbour's clinic recommended that her pet is only vaccinated once every three years and you are still sending me a reminder card after one year?

"There are some new thoughts about vaccination policies for our pets, I suggest that when you come in for

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last vaccination?

your appointment you talk to the vet so that they can explain some of the different options available and discuss with you how our practice has decided to address these issues."

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

Can all the diseases be vaccinated against every 3 years?

"No, because some of the immunity your pet gets from vaccination is less durable than others we still need to vaccinate against some of the "non-core" disease more frequently than every three years. These are Bordetella (kennel cough), Leptospira, parainfluenza, chlamydia and FLV. If we have recommended in the past that your pets should be covered against these diseases because of the type of "life-style" they have or because of our location, then we will still be vaccinating your pet against these as previously explained."

Do these changes affect my puppy or kittens vaccination program?

"No, it is still absolutely vital that you keep your new pet healthy and safe by having it fully vaccinated against the potentially fatal diseases that vaccination can safeguard against. *Then explain the vaccination protocol that your clinic recommends.*"

What about when my pet goes into the kennel or cattery, will they accept it if it's over a year since its

"Most owners and managers of boarding facilities accept the expert opinion of a trained veterinarian and will be happy that your pet is safely covered if it has been vaccinated according to the recommendation of your vet or clinic."

Remember you will still have a formal, signed vaccination record that shows when you last vaccinated and the date your next vaccination is due. We recommend that you ask your kennel or cattery about this when you make your booking and if they are unsure about the situation recommend that they contact us. Remember we recommend that you have your dogs vaccinated against bordetella before they go on holiday and this is one of the "non-core" disease we recommend is protected against more frequently."

Conclusion

This is a very short and informal discussion of the changes we are currently seeing regarding vaccination of pet animals.

It is not designed to provide you with all the scientific answers to the debate, instead it is meant to give you some ideas for how you might respond to some of the questions we think will frequently "pop-up"

If you or your clinic would like further information regarding this issue they could contact the team at Massey University Companion Animal Center.