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### Vaccinations: A Word of Caution for Our Animals – Part I

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### Vaccinations: A Word of Caution for Our Animals – Part I

#### Efficacy ( Does it Work?)

Every procedure we do to ourselves or those in our care should be a useful one or there is no reason to do it. This may seem obvious, but bears mentioning, especially in the world of modern medicine. While vaccinations may confer immunity in animals, how effective or useful is it to repeat this procedure every year, as is the standard recommendation in this country today?

Immunology has recognized for a great many years that viruses in vaccinations confer a long-lived immunity. This is why your physician is not sending you postcards every year to repeat your small pox or polio vaccinations annually. They understand your immune system was adequately stimulated in childhood, and a cellular memory exists in you that will "wake up" if any future challenges from these viruses occur. Is there some profound difference in animals that makes us think they need to repeat their vaccinations yearly? Let me quote from the experts. The following was printed in Current Veterinary Therapy, volume XI, published several years ago (this is a very well respected, peer-reviewed book that is updated every four years). The authors are veterinary immunologists Ronald Schultz ( University of Wisconsin) and Tom Phillips (Scrips Research Institute).

"A practice that was started many years ago and that lacks scientific validity or verification is annual revaccination. Almost without exception there is no immunologic requirement for annual revaccination. Immunity to viruses persists for years or for the life of the animal..... Furthermore, revaccination with most viral vaccines fails to stimulate an anamnestic (secondary) response.... The practice of annual vaccination in our opinion should be considered of questionable efficacy..."

In plain English, that means you are wasting a lot of money (and, as we'll see later, risking your animals' health) without much likelihood that your animal is actually becoming "boosted" each year. In other words, the immunity that was established in early life persists, and it is that immunity that actually interferes with subsequent vaccinations. It's much like the case of vaccinating very young puppies. If you vaccinate a puppy (or kitten) at a too young age, the maternal antibodies from the mother's immune system are still present, and the vaccine will be thwarted in its attempt to provoke an immune response.

I had the pleasure to meet Dr. Schultz at a veterinary conference a few years ago. He has done research for many of the companies that market vaccines. It was very interesting to hear his perspective of 25 years in this field. He clearly had not come to this understanding lightly. One most interesting fact was the way that rabies vaccine comes to be labeled. We currently have a "One-year rabies" and a "Three-year rabies" vaccine. On the labels, the one-year must be repeated yearly and the three- year must be repeated every three years. The reason behind this is the length of time the experimental animals were studied. At the end of one year after their vaccination, the animals were challenged with live rabies virus, the survivors tallied, and the vaccine marketed. The same vaccine was studied for three years , the data gathered, and this vaccine lot was marketed as "Three-year rabies vaccine." Rabies vaccine is so effective in immunizing that there is likely life-long protection. Why then do we vaccinate annually? And why, in light of the understanding above, are we Texas veterinarians required to use the three-year vaccine annually? Unfortunately, we have a law in place that fails to recognize immunological facts. In Texas, all dogs and cats are required to be vaccinated annually against rabies.

What about the other vaccinations? They are also viral vaccines, so there should be "no immunological requirement" for repeating them yearly. Also know that none of the others are required by law to be repeated annually. Some are even useless to give at any age, others at any age over one year.

A lot of what conventional medicine recommends is based on is fear. If there's a "bad germ" out there that might "get us" (or our pets), we want to use something to protect against that germ. We've all heard horror stories about dogs dying of Parvovirus infection, so we are admonished to get yearly (or even twice yearly!) vaccinations against this deadly disease. Yet how many adult dogs die of Parvo each year? Ask your veterinarian this question. Parvo is almost always a disease of puppies under one year of age, and very occasionally old

dogs who have weakened immune systems from unhealthy living (commercial diets and frequent vaccinations!). Why, then should we vaccinate against it yearly throughout life? Coronavirus also causes puppy diarrhea and vomiting, but differs from Parvo in that it is not fatal. Is it worthwhile injecting viruses into our animals for a disease from which they will surely survive? Dr. Schultz and others feel it is not. Yet this and other non-fatal viruses are in common use in every "annual (non-)booster" given.

You might ask why this annual vaccination habit exists. It's a very good question, and one that conventional medicine is examining more and more frequently as time goes on. A recent watershed occurred when a renowned University of California-Davis veterinary researcher and professor, Neils Pedersen, commented on the practice in a very well respected conventional magazine called AAHA Trends (AAHA is the American Animal Hospital Association). "current vaccine practices are medically unsound. It is time to question the wisdom of annual booster, multivalent products (combination vaccines, the most common being DHLPP for dogs and FVRCP for cats), and unnecessary vaccines. Doing so will return companion animals' immunization to its status as a medical and not an economical procedure."

What will get us a lot closer to what we really want (healthy animals who are resistant to all disease) is to focus on raising our individual animals in the way that allows them to do what nature intended: to live freely, happily, and fully alive, with an immune system that responds directly to any challenge that confronts them. In our haste to protect our pets, let's not forget that it's the animal's immune system that protects, not some solution of viruses in a syringe.

In Part II, I address another aspect of the vaccine question: safety. For now, suffice it to say that if your dog or cat is an adult who has had vaccinations, there is no immunologic need to continue vaccinating annually: the immunity is present from the early vaccines and will not get any better through yearly repetition.

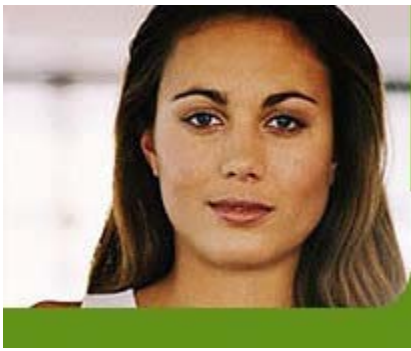
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About the Author

Dr. Will Falconer, DVM, enjoys a full-time classical homeopathic practice in Austin, Texas. To learn what Dr. Falconer has been recommending to his clients on all matter of natural health care for years, visit [www.Alt4Animals.com](http://www.Alt4Animals.com).

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### Vaccinations: A Word of Caution for Our Animals – Part II

#### Safety (Is It Free of Harm?)

Have you ever wondered why you get a reminder every year to revaccinate your pet when your physician never prompts you to do the same for your family or yourself? I'd like you to question the notion that we need this frequent vaccinating, and go a step further and listen to some evidence that this practice may actually be harmful to our four-footed friends.

If someone, even someone in a white coat, suggests that you take a drug or get injected with some substance, two logical questions ought to immediately arise in your mind:

1. Is this beneficial to me (or does this work as intended)?
2. Is this safe?

If we ask these two questions about annual revaccination of animals, and we ask the right people, we'll get a negative answer to both. We've already covered the first question in Part I: efficacy of annual revaccination is clearly lacking according to immunologists. A more important question is the safety issue, as a growing body of evidence mounts showing a correlation between vaccinations and chronic disease.

The chronic diseases have many names, including arthritis, hypo- or hyperthyroidism, allergies, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, repeated ear infections, skin disease, heart disease, diabetes, kidney failure, and cancer. What makes them nightmarish is that they linger, they are not easily cured, and they are slowly, progressively degenerative, meaning the patient declines in health over the time they are present. The best that conventional medicine can do with chronic disease is to control symptoms through suppressive therapies. This is fraught with problems, including side effects from the drugs, and apparently "new," more serious diseases arising from the continued course of suppression. So, our greatest goal as animal caretakers should be to prevent chronic disease in the first place.

The onset of chronic disease after vaccination is often delayed, coming about 1-2 months afterwards. This is not close enough for conventional medical minds to appreciate the correlation, but it's there nonetheless. The evidence of this comes from both anecdotal sources and research studies.

A British veterinarian has, for the last 10-12 years, asked those clients who present him with an itchy, allergic dog, "When did this itchiness begin?" The response is striking. Some 75% remember clearly: it began within 1-2 months of the "puppy shots." Anecdotal evidence in human medicine is pointing to a cause and effect relationship between childhood vaccines and autism. There has been a marked increase in incidence of this devastating disease that parallels the increased number of vaccinations now required of children. The interval between vaccination and disease? About one month.

In a research study published in 1996, the authors looked at a deadly canine disease of a confused immune system. Known as immune-mediated hemolytic anemia (IMHA), it means the dogs' immune systems attacked their own red blood cells as if they were foreign. Needless to say, this is life-challenging and the death rate is high, as one cannot live long without the oxygen-carrying red blood cells. In the study, 58 dogs with the illness, presenting at a veterinary teaching hospital over a two year period, were compared to a control group presenting for other problems over the same time. The question was asked, "Did anything precede the onset of IMHA?" Lo and behold, a highly statistically significant group of the sick dogs had been vaccinated with the usual yearly vaccines one month earlier. It was so significant that the authors entitled their paper, "Vaccine-Associated Immune-Mediated Hemolytic Anemia in the Dog." (Duval and Giger, J Vet Intern Med 1996;10:290-295)

In cats, researchers have known for the last ten years about the correlation between vaccines and a malignant tumor. This particular

tumor arises where the vaccines are commonly given, in the area of loose skin at the back of the neck, or in the back of the hind leg. It appears to be uniformly fatal, even with extensive surgery. And it has been clearly associated with two particular vaccines, rabies and feline leukemia. Finally, in 2000, recognizing the clear cause and effect relationship between vaccination and this cancer, the disease was renamed by the research community. It is now officially called Vaccine-Associated Sarcoma.

In the early days of homeopathic veterinary practice, a number of us would see something we would later call the "vaccinosis phenomenon." It was instructive to us as to just how significant an impact vaccinations had had on our animal patients. We would be presented with a chronically ill animal, and after carefully choosing and giving the appropriate homeopathic remedy, we'd be met with disappointing results. A second or third prescription would be made with similar dismal responses from the patient. Finally, we'd go back to the owner and ask about vaccinations. Inevitably the patient was vaccinated. "Whenever we got the reminder postcard, we went in for the shots." Then we would reanalyze the case in light of this knowledge, and look at remedies that were particularly noted to have been applicable in illness that arose after vaccination. When we'd prescribe again with a "vaccinosis" remedy, the results were often startling. Not only would the disease symptoms lessen by 50% or more, but the patient would start acting more normally. The dog who was hyperactive would settle down and pay attention, the angry cat would become a lover again, or the animal terrified of visitors would come out and say hello. The owners were so impressed with the changes that they would often call before the next appointment to tell us how great things were going!

The inference we have made from this experience, repeated over and over in different parts of the country in different practitioners' hands, is simple: vaccinations are responsible for a significant portion of the illness we see in the patients with chronic disease.

The veterinary profession slowly continues to evaluate this practice of vaccinating annually. In 2000, the American Association of Feline Practitioners came out with an official statement against annual vaccination in the cat. They based this position on research from Cornell where kittens, vaccinated once, measured seven years later still showing evidence of immunity from those vaccines. Quite frankly though, I don't think we can afford to wait for the whole profession to catch up. Our animals are at risk to become chronically ill if we continue this baseless practice of annual revaccination. And, years from now when we look back incredulously at how such a practice was ever thought to be wise, wouldn't it be nice to be able to smile and pat your healthy twenty-something pet and say, "We knew. We stopped. That's why you're still here."

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