



Preventive Care

Dogs

Preventive care recommendations vary somewhat for each individual pet. Lifestyle of the client and pet (and associated risk factors), concurrent disease states, as well as philosophy of the client all contribute to determining the best recommendations. We will make every effort to determine this for each individual pet. What follows are our general recommendations, which apply to the majority of our patients, for preventive care.

Canine vaccinations - Core group: All dogs should receive the following "core" vaccines:

- **Rabies:** should be given at 12-16 weeks old, again at one year of age and then every three years (unless an unknown bite wound or contact with a suspect rabid animal occurs, in which case a booster is given). Rabies is an extraordinarily dangerous, invariably fatal viral disease that can be passed to humans. It is transmitted usually by the bite of an infected animal, but contact with bodily fluids of an infected animal can also cause transmission of the disease. Bats are always considered "rabies suspect" and have been known to transmit the virus by scratching. We insist on this vaccine (except in rare disease states) for the safety of you, your pet, and our staff.
- **Distemper/Parvovirus/Parainfluenza/Adenovirus (a combination vaccine, "DA2PP"):** these are collectively referred to as the "distemper shot" and it should be given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks old, again at about 1 year old and then every 3-5 years.
 - **Canine Distemper virus** causes a potentially very dangerous disease that can affect the respiratory, GI, and neurologic systems. We do not see this disease often anymore, largely due to routine vaccination. Puppies and unvaccinated dogs, especially in a shelter or pet store situation, are at highest risk.
 - **Parvovirus** is another viral disease that we don't see much anymore, but it killed thousands and thousands of dogs and puppies before the vaccine was developed. Parvo is still "out there" though, and causes potentially fatal GI disease, especially in unvaccinated or undervaccinated puppies. Because it is so hardy in the environment (the virus is shed in the stool of infected dogs), you have to assume it is "everywhere" – this is why it is so important to have your puppy vaccinated on schedule.
 - **Parainfluenza virus** is one of the microorganisms that contribute to "infectious tracheobronchitis" or kennel cough.
 - **Canine Adenovirus** causes infectious hepatitis (liver disease) in dogs.
- **Leptospirosis:** should be given at 12 and 16 weeks old, followed by annual boosters. If given for the first time as an adult, one booster is needed 3-4 weeks later. It is a potentially serious and possibly fatal bacterial disease carried by wildlife, which can affect the kidneys and/or liver, among other things. Exposure usually occurs after contact with wildlife urine. This is a potentially

zoonotic disease (can be transmitted from animals to people), and many strains, called *serovars*, exist. We are able to vaccinate for only four of these strains, but they are the four most likely to cause disease in dogs. Risk factors include hunting, swimming, or otherwise being exposed to water (even drinking from puddles), but since rodents can carry this disease, even dogs that don't engage in these activities can be exposed (anywhere – even the backyard). New England is considered an endemic area for Lepto, so although this is technically not a “core” vaccine, we consider it a very important one especially since it is transmissible to humans, so have included it on the core list. On the downside, this vaccine has the highest reaction (side effect) rate, so if a vaccine reaction is observed, we may premedicate prior to giving the vaccine or discontinue it altogether if we are concerned for your dog’s safety. Reaction rates are still *very* low, so in the vast majority of cases, the benefit will far outweigh the risk.

Canine vaccinations - Non-core group: "Non-core" vaccines are considered optional and whether they are given depend on risk factors for each dog.

- **Bordatella** (Infectious tracheobronchitis, “Kennel Cough”): This is an annual vaccine given as an oral or nasal drop or as an injection. Any dog who goes to daycare, dog classes, field trials, goes to a groomer, or is routinely exposed to other dogs should have this vaccine. Some at-risk dogs may benefit from twice-yearly vaccination. It protects against the most common bacteria that causes the disease, but not all. "Kennel Cough" is usually a self-limiting tracheobronchitis (inflammation of the airways) that causes a dry cough, often with a gag at the end. Most dogs will clear the cough within 2 weeks or less, but in very young or old debilitated dogs, secondary pneumonia is possible. Kennel cough is very contagious via aerosol (through the air). Dogs who have kennel cough should not have contact with other dogs until the cough has completely resolved.
- **Lyme:** This is also an annual vaccine; the first time a dog receives the vaccination, it needs to be boosted 3-4 weeks later. Dogs who are active outdoors in any environment may benefit from the vaccine. In recent years we have seen a steady and startling rise in the number of dogs testing positive for Lyme in our area, so we feel that most dogs should receive this vaccine. Lyme Disease is transmitted by ticks and can cause a variety of signs, including general malaise and joint stiffness. Lyme can also have effects on the nervous system, kidneys, and many other body systems, and in a small number of cases can be fatal. The vaccine is only one way to protect your dog – using a topical flea/tick product is also very important. See "External parasites" below.