



April 2009

Dear Clients,

Thank you for your support and confidence to place your animal's health in our hands. We have always strived to provide the very best health care for our patients, and we want to tell you about an **upcoming change** that we know will enhance and improve the quality of life for our patients.

First we want to emphasize the importance of an annual wellness exam. Since pets age 6-7 years for every human year, this is the equivalent of only getting a physical exam every 6-7 years for us. The point is a lot can change in one calendar year. Early detection of any health problem is by far the best way to cure or treat the issues. We recommend an annual physical exam for all pets from one to six years of age. After six years of age we highly recommend a physical exam every six months. This allows us to detect possible medical problems at the earliest stage so that we can initiate treatment promptly in order to keep your pet healthy for as long as possible. This in addition to annual testing for intestinal parasites as well as heartworm and tick borne disease testing in dogs are important components to your pets' preventative healthcare.

There is a **major change** that has to do with our vaccine protocols. As many of you have heard, there are several research studies that have proven that the immunity produced from some of our vaccines last longer than one year. Also, there is a concern that over vaccinating pets can be harmful and lead to disease itself. Because of these facts we are changing our vaccine protocols to maximize protection and minimize risk. In order to provide your pet with the best in preventative care, the doctors of Town and Country Veterinary Hospital recommend that after your pet is fully vaccinated **and** two years old that vaccines be given on a staggered three year schedule. This staggered vaccine schedule will allow us to give your pet vaccines that will protect them from contagious diseases but minimize the number of vaccines that are given each year. Currently, we vaccinate your pet every year with a vaccine that covers five to seven diseases; with the new protocol your pet would receive a vaccine for one to three diseases on a staggered schedule so that each major vaccine is given every three years. The following page contains additional information about the vaccination recommendations.

Veterinary medicine changes over time as research leads to new information. Through our continual efforts to provide your pet with optimal health care we amend our recommendations to new information in order to always offer the best medicine. At your next scheduled vaccine appointment we will evaluate and make a vaccine schedule tailored to your pet. If you have any questions or concerns about these changes please contact us for more information. Thank you for allowing us to continue to provide the best medical care for your pet.

Sincerely,

The doctors and staff of Town and Country Veterinary Hospital

Below are general vaccination guidelines, though each pet will be assessed individually by your doctor and the protocol tailored to your pet's needs.

Dogs

Rabies is a viral disease that can be transmitted to people through infected saliva. It causes severe central nervous system signs and is fatal. **The initial vaccine is given between 3 and 4 months of age and is good for one year. Subsequent vaccines are good for 3 years. This is required by law.**

The “Distemper” or DHPP vaccine that your dog has probably been given in the past protects against distemper, parvo, hepatitis and parainfluenza viruses. Distemper is a viral disease that can cause upper respiratory and gastrointestinal disease. Parvovirus causes severe gastrointestinal disease. Hepatitis is a virus that causes liver failure and gastrointestinal disease. Parainfluenza causes respiratory disease. All of these contagious viruses can be fatal, especially in young dogs, but occasionally older ones too. **We recommend an initial vaccine series followed by a one year booster. This vaccine is then recommended every three years.**

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that dogs get from standing water contaminated with animals’ urine. The infection can lead to kidney and/or liver disease and can be fatal. There are several different strains of Leptospirosis. Some vaccines provide protection from only one or two strains. The Leptospirosis vaccine that we are using will provide protection from four common strains of Leptospirosis. Leptospirosis can be transmitted to people from an infected pet which is another reason to make sure that your pet is protected. **Because this is a bacterial infection and not a virus, vaccines only protect for one year, we recommend that this vaccine be given every year after the initial vaccine series.**

Bordetella, or kennel cough, is also a bacterial infection which causes upper respiratory symptoms. The immunity produced from the vaccine is not long lasting and animals in some situations are more likely to be exposed. After the initial vaccine series (initial vaccine and 3 week booster), the vaccine is given every 6 months. **If your pet boards, goes to doggie daycare, or gets groomed on a regular basis, we recommend that they get vaccinated every six months.**

Cats

The rabies vaccine protocol is similar to dogs except for one difference. The three year vaccine has an adjuvant added - something to boost the immune response. There is a small association between the adjuvant used in some vaccines and a vaccine induced tumor called a fibrosarcoma. In order to minimize this risk there is an option to give your cat a rabies vaccine without an adjuvant. **This vaccine provides protection for one year and has to be given annually.**

The feline “distemper” vaccine protects against rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, and panleukopenia. The rhino, calici, and chlamydia viruses cause upper respiratory infections while panleukopenia causes gastrointestinal signs. **We recommend an initial vaccine series followed by a one year booster. This vaccine is then recommended every three years.**

Feline leukemia virus can compromise the immune system which can lead to the development of leukemia or lymphoma. This virus is transmitted through direct contact with an infected cat. Because of this, we only recommend feline leukemia vaccines for cats that go outdoors or live with cats that go outdoors. **If at risk, we recommend an initial feline leukemia series followed by an annual booster.**

The feline vaccines that we recommend are adjuvant free which makes them safer for your cat.

Sample Vaccine Schedule

Below is a sample vaccine schedule for a cat and a dog. The order that the vaccines will be given will remain the same however where your pet starts on the vaccine schedule will be determined at your visit.

Dogs

Year 1 - Physical exam, heartworm/tick borne disease testing, fecal exam

Distemper vaccine

Leptospirosis vaccine

Bordetella vaccine (booster every 6 months)

Year 2 - Physical exam, heartworm/tick borne disease testing, fecal exam

Parvovirus vaccine

Leptospirosis vaccine

Bordetella vaccine (booster every 6 months)

Year 3 - Physical exam, heartworm/tick borne disease testing, fecal exam

Rabies vaccine

Leptospirosis vaccine

Bordetella vaccine (booster every 6 months)

Cats

Year 1 - Physical exam, fecal exam

Rabies vaccine

FVRCP- calicivirus, rhinotracheitis, chlamydia, and panleukopenia

Feline leukemia vaccine (if at risk)

Year 2 - Physical exam, fecal exam

Rabies vaccine

Feline leukemia vaccine (if at risk)

Year 3 - Physical exam, fecal exam

Rabies vaccine

Feline leukemia vaccine (if at risk)