

VACCINES AND YOUR PET

Vaccines help prepare the body's immune system to fight the invasion of disease-causing organisms. Vaccines contain antigens, which look like the disease-causing organism to the immune system but don't actually cause disease. When the vaccine is introduced to the body, the immune system is mildly stimulated. If a pet is ever exposed to the real disease, his immune system is now prepared to recognize and fight it off entirely or reduce the severity of the illness.

Experts agree that widespread use of vaccines within the last century has prevented death and disease in millions of animals. Even though some formerly common diseases have now become uncommon, vaccination is still highly recommended because these serious disease agents continue to be present in the environment.

Not every pet needs to be vaccinated against every disease. It is very important to discuss with your veterinarian a vaccination protocol that's right for your pet. Factors that should be examined include age, medical history, environment, travel habits and lifestyle.

Some pets are homebodies and have less opportunity for exposure to infectious disease, whereas others have a great deal of exposure to other pets and/or wildlife and infectious disease by virtue of their activities. Still other pets live in geographic areas that place them at greater risk for contracting some infectious diseases. It is the important to customize a vaccination program to individual patients.