

## RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH VACCINES

### WHY ALL THE FUSS ABOUT VACCINATION?

The development of effective vaccine programs is the major reason for the reduction of infectious diseases in pets. When high population coverage is achieved with an effective vaccine, the occurrence of cases of the disease that the vaccine prevents may be rare. In the rare occurrence of disease, however, illness associated with the vaccine itself or presumed to be associated with vaccination can cause more public concern than the prevented disease. This phenomenon has resulted in questions by pet owners regarding "over-vaccinating" and the overall benefits of vaccines. A danger of dramatic reductions in vaccination coverage rates, however, is the precipitation of an epidemic of the disease that vaccination would prevent.

- **Overall, vaccines are extremely beneficial and it is likely veterinarians have helped many more pets with vaccines than have been hurt.** Most pets show no signs of vaccine reactions.
- In both human and veterinary medicine, attention has turned to matters of vaccine safety. Vaccines given to dogs and cats are very safe products that have been through rigorous safety testing before licensure. However, no vaccine (either human or animal) can be guaranteed 100% safe.
- Even peanut allergies or bee stings can be life threatening if you have the genetic makeup to develop allergic reactions.
- **Vaccines** should mildly stimulate the animal's immune system in order to create protection from infectious diseases. This stimulation can create mild symptoms, ranging from soreness at the injection site to fever.
- Reactions range from mild and transient effects to rare life-threatening reactions. The worst case scenario is that up to 30 dogs or 50 cats may suffer some form of reaction for every 10,000 animals that are vaccinated.

**MILD SIDE EFFECTS:** May start within hours of the vaccination. If these side effects last for more than a day or two, or cause your pet significant discomfort, it is important for you to contact your veterinarian:

- Discomfort and local swelling at the vaccination site. Can apply ice pack/frozen peas at vaccine site.
- Mild fever
- Decreased appetite and activity
- Sneezing, mild coughing, "snotty nose" or other respiratory signs may occur 2-5 days after your pet receives an intranasal vaccine

**MORE SERIOUS ALLERGIC REACTIONS:** May occur within minutes to hours after vaccination. These reactions can be life-threatening and are medical emergencies. **Seek veterinary care immediately if any of these signs develop:**

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Itchy skin that may seem bumpy ("hives")
- Swelling of the muzzle and around the face, neck, or eyes
- Severe coughing or difficulty breathing
- Collapse/shock
- Pale gums
- Death