



Is My Dog *Really* “Up-to-Date” on Vaccines?

There are many names for the vaccines dogs require to keep them protected against common canine viruses, and many myths surrounding them. The most important thing to know is that these vaccines were developed, and are recommended, to keep our pets protected against many common, FATAL canine viruses.

The “distemper vaccine, 5-way, 7-way, annual vaccine” for dogs is actually a DAPP vaccination against 4 viruses. If your dog has received a complete series of 4 vaccinations as a puppy, yearly vaccination for the next 3 years, and then triennial vaccinations, it is considered “up-to-date” on the DAPP vaccine. If it hasn’t, it is not fully vaccinated.

Distemper virus in dogs is similar to measles in humans. The infection starts with a runny nose, ocular discharge, fever, poor appetite, and coughing, and progresses to vomiting and diarrhea, before the neurologic stage, which results in seizures, tremors, limb weakness, and imbalance. Dogs are exposed to distemper from other infected dogs in the coughing stage. Although it is possible for puppies to survive a bout with distemper, many of them die before they reach the neurologic stages. Vaccination has drastically cut down on the incidence of distemper, but it is still a threat to the unvaccinated dog population.

Adenovirus 2 and **Parainfluenza** are two viral components of the Canine Kennel Cough Complex. This respiratory infection produces a sore throat and coughing. Both viruses are easily spread in warm air conditions with poor circulation (i.e. boarding and grooming facilities, animal shelters, and obedience classes). An additional vaccine, Bordetella or Kennel Cough Vaccine, is usually required to board your dog – this is a separate vaccine.

Canine **Parvovirus** was first reported in dogs in the early 1970’s, making it a fairly new disease. It is passed through infected stool. The virus enters the body through the mouth when the puppy cleans itself, or eats food off the ground or floor. It takes only a miniscule amount of infected stool to infect the puppy. A puppy’s immature immune system makes them more susceptible to disease than an adult dog. Once infected, the virus rapidly reproduces – symptoms occur 3-7 days after exposure. The GI tract is hit the hardest, producing vomiting and diarrhea, to the point of dehydration, shock, and death. While puppies are more susceptible to the virus because of their immature immune system, ANY non-vaccinated dog, regardless of age, can become seriously ill and die from the virus. It is difficult to kill in the environment, and exposure and disease can occur as long as 6 months after the virus infects the environment.

Rabies is a viral, zoonotic disease. It is fatal, and all mammals are susceptible to disease. Rabies is transmitted via saliva through mucous membranes or open wounds. Rabies vaccination is required by Ohio law in all dogs. The first vaccination is given to puppies between 4 and 6 months of age. One year later, a second vaccine is given- rabies vaccines are given every 3 years from that point on. Proof of rabies vaccination by a veterinarian is mandatory in Ohio. All vaccinated dogs should wear a rabies tag at all times.

So, if your dog has only received its “puppy shot”, it is not really up-to-date on vaccinations and is susceptible to these common viruses.