

Pawsitive Press

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Why do pets need vaccines?

By: Wade Matthews, D.V.M.

When puppies and kittens are born they do not have a fully functional immune system and they are very susceptible to diseases. Luckily for them their gastro intestinal tracts are able to absorb things in the first few days of life that they can never absorb again as they age. This is helpful as the kittens mature so bacteria stay in the gastro intestinal tract and they do not get into the blood stream and make them sick. When the queen has a litter the first milk produced is called colostrum. It is almost clear in color and only slightly looks like milk. It has the mother's antibodies in a concentrated form to help the kitten be protected from diseases. These antibodies are very large proteins and in a kitten over 3 to 5 days old cannot be absorbed. It is imperative that kittens get this colostrum to be protected from diseases in the first few days of life. The problem with this



system is that these antibodies will only last for a few months and there is no guarantee that they will last long enough for the kitten to produce their own antibodies.



Vaccines were designed to be given to puppies and kittens so they can make their own antibodies. Vaccines are made up of proteins or antigens that are usually pieces of a specific virus. This allows the immune system to build antibodies to the antigens and then kill the virus if the kitten or puppy ever see it. This process takes at least a few weeks. Not knowing how long the antibodies from the mother last for each kitten and knowing

that it takes a few weeks for them to make antibodies from the vaccines, we vaccinate at least twice for most all vaccines so the kittens will never have a time when they are not protected.



Most kittens will get a FVRCP (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calici, panleukopenia) around 9 weeks of age and then another in 3 weeks. The last vaccine needs to be given at 12 weeks or older to ensure that the mother's antibodies the kitten got from the colostrum are gone and the vaccine will work. I recommend that kittens who have outside exposure be vaccinated in the same manner for feline leukemia. Puppies would have the same protocol for DHPPV (distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza and parvo). Puppies also need a Bordetella vaccine to protect them from tracheitis. Both puppies and kittens should have a rabies vaccine at 12 weeks or older. There are other vaccines that can be used for your pet, your veterinarian may

Vaccines Cont'd

recommend them if your pets situation is different. Vaccines are never more important than in the very young. I have practiced veterinary medicine for 37 years and have seen dogs dying daily when we did not have a vaccine for parvovirus. Vaccines save pets lives please see your veterinarian with your new puppy.

Adult dog vaccines are not needed as often for the viral caused diseases, these are primarily rabies, distemper and parvovirus. The exact duration of immunity is different for all dogs, but it is likely that three years is protective for all adult dogs and it is recommended that they be vaccinated at that interval. The vaccines for bacterial diseases in adult dogs, primarily leptospirosis and bordetella are still on a yearly basis. Due to the extreme size difference between viruses and bacteria these vaccines do not protect as long. Adult cats require rabies and feline distemper every three years. Cats require feline leukemia every year if they are at risk for exposure. Some veterinarians still vaccinate pets every year, and they have good reasons for that, but we feel good about our protocol and it is supported by many veterinary schools. Pets should be given a physical exam at least yearly because there are many problems they may have that only your veterinarian will be able to find.

Welcome Dr. Emma!

Dr. Emma will start working the AHOD team on July 5th



Dr. Emma is an associate veterinarian at the Animal Hospital of Dunedin. She received her Bachelors of Science from the University of Central Florida and her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from Ross University. Dr. Emma is Fear Free Certified and has a special interest in preventative medicine, soft-tissue surgery, dermatology, and alternative medicine.

From an early age, Dr. Emma knew she wanted to become a veterinarian. Her family was constantly rescuing abandoned or sick animals causing her to happily grow up in a mini zoo. In 2008 she started her work in the veterinary field as a vet assistant.

Dr. Emma has two adopted coconut retrievers (St. Kitts/Caribbean dogs) “Dobby” and “Potato”, an island cat named “Monty”, and two American cats named “Loki” and “Luna”. In her free time she enjoys going for runs, obstacle course races, and of course spending time with her pets. She is also an avid hockey fan! A fun fact about Dr. Emma is her favorite food is donuts!

Please help us welcome Dr. Emma to our practice!

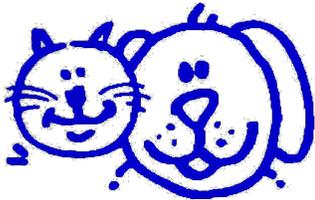
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See Dr. Emma for an exam and receive a \$5 Bath and Nail Trim

See Dr. Emma for a patient exam and receive a \$5 Bath and Nail Trim! Double coated pets excluded. Bathing includes shampooing, ear cleaning, nail trim, warm air drying, and a brush out. Coupon must be presented at the time of purchase. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer including \$1exam.

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