



Crow River  
Animal Hospital  
& Dental Clinic

Friday Fun Facts – Number 34:2010

**Melissa Shelton DVM – Vaccinations – Current Viewpoints – 2010 – Part I  
Canine Distemper**

Disclaimer: All of the information provided here is intended for educational purposes. The information is not intended to diagnose, treat, or prescribe for any illness. Please seek the advice of a qualified health care professional in your area of concern if you or your pets have a health challenge.



While vaccinations have been thought of as a miracle to the modern medical world, there is still far too much information that we do not know about these so-called protective injections. I am always amazed at the variety of clients I see in my practice, with regards to vaccinations. I have people who blindly allow any vaccination to be given; regardless of if it makes sense to their pet's lifestyle (or their child for that matter). I have people who question which vaccinations should be given, if they are necessary, and if they are safe. And, I have people who are vehemently opposed to vaccinations, and wouldn't consider having one given if their life depended on it.

I respect all viewpoints, except for those who just allow these decisions to be made for their pets or family, without any thought of it. I think it is dangerous when we start to allow "established" medicine the power to decide what is best for our health – especially when it is not being considered on an individual basis, but as a population. This is the problem that I see for pets right now. General recommendations for vaccinations were set for animal populations as a whole – and very little consideration was placed on the individual pet, and their individual health concerns, risk of exposure, or lifestyle.

Things are getting better for pets. However, I am sad to say, it doesn't appear to be as much of a drive in the human vaccination market – to improve vaccinations

and to study the necessity or frequency of vaccines. I am pleased to say that I recently went to a vaccine company sponsored lecture – where the focus was on LESS vaccinations and SAFER vaccinations for pets! This is truly a good sign. The presenter actually had great values, really believed in “less is more”, and confided in me after the talk, that he did not vaccinate his own children!!  
REFRESHING!

So what do you need to know about vaccinations? Well, every year the recommendations are changing. That is one reason why I included a date with the title of this newsletter. Every year, what I recommend for pets changes. As people are evaluating vets, I think that this is a good sign... Ask your veterinarian how they have changed the way they vaccinate pets in the last few years. Most should have altered something, or at least have given it plenty of thought and can tell you about their current thoughts. If they really have no opinion, then they likely aren't keeping current on that subject matter – and if it is important to you – then find a vet that it is equally important to.

Here is what I currently recommend:



**Puppies and kittens:** It is generally still a good idea to have puppies and kittens vaccinated their first year of life, since young animals are the most susceptible to disease. There are exceptions, and these should be discussed with a holistic or naturopathic veterinarian. For people dedicated to never vaccinating, there is support for that as well. Far be it for me to tell someone that they have to vaccinate

their pet. I look at it as I look at my children's vaccines; what if someone were to force me to vaccinate? There are supportive measures with supplements, essential oils, diet and other holistic modalities – which can maintain immune systems naturally and effectively.

However, for those puppies who will receive vaccinations - depending on the risk of exposure – we can often start initial vaccinations at 12 weeks of age instead of the typical 6-8 weeks. By doing this, we can give only 2 vaccinations instead of 3 in the typical puppy schedule. I also try to give all vaccinations separately – so the body can mount a decent and individual immune response to

each vaccine. This means a distemper combination vaccination on one visit, and the rabies shot on a different visit.

**Canine Distemper:** This is a combination vaccination. It contains several different viral and/or bacterial diseases within one shot. In the past (and unfortunately still at some vet clinics), there can be upwards of 5 or 6 different vaccinations within this “one shot”. Our vet clinic is currently down to a “3-way” distemper vaccination – which includes Distemper, Adenovirus 2, and Parvo Virus. It is likely at some point that Adenovirus will be dropped from the vaccine, but currently this combination is not available without it.

We also feel it is important to use a modified-live vaccination. With modified live vaccines, adjuvants (the nasty chemicals contained within vaccines to stimulate an immune response) are not necessary. Adjuvants have been linked with severe reactions and with causing tumors. The best thing we can do is to try to reduce the amount of adjuvants we expose ourselves or our pets to. Adjuvants must be added to a “killed virus” vaccination; otherwise our body would never stimulate a response to it. So, although a modified-live vaccine has a little more potential to make a pet stiff and sore, it is far better than causing a tumor or other life-threatening illness with the addition of toxic and harmful chemical adjuvants.

You have a choice. So why use adjuvants?					
	MERIAL <sup>3</sup>	PFIZER <sup>3</sup>	FT. DODGE <sup>3</sup>	SCHERING-PLOUGH <sup>3</sup>	INTERVET <sup>3</sup>
FeLV	nonadjuvanted	adjuvanted	adjuvanted	adjuvanted	n/a
Rabies	nonadjuvanted	adjuvanted	adjuvanted	adjuvanted	adjuvanted
VS-Calicivirus	n/a	n/a	adjuvanted	n/a	n/a
Core RCP	nonadjuvanted	nonadjuvanted	adjuvanted*	nonadjuvanted	nonadjuvanted

\*Ft. Dodge offers both killed (adjuvanted) and MLV (nonadjuvanted) rhinotracheitis-calici-panleukopenia combinations.

I also do not recommend separating the distemper and parvo vaccinations, which had become a popular practice with breeders a while back. By giving distemper in one shot, then parvo in a different shot – they were actually injecting their puppies with even more adjuvant. So, although the theory was sound – their vaccination choices were not. Most people purchased their own vaccinations based on cost or availability, and not on the actual “health implications” of the vaccination. For those breeders who would like to purchase

their own vaccinations – I have STRONG feelings on which brands they should be purchasing.

My choice in canine vaccine brands right now is to use Merial – Recombitek Vaccinations. This company has been quite dedicated to reducing the need for adjuvants in vaccinations – and this commitment needs to be demanded and supported by veterinarians and pet owners alike. Recombitek vaccines insert the canine viral information into a canary pox virus. The canary pox is large enough to stimulate an immune response in the canine body, but cannot replicate as an active virus within the dog – so there is no risk of causing disease in the animal receiving the vaccination. In the past, modified-live vaccinations have carried with them the potential for causing the disease they were trying to prevent.

**Frequency of Vaccinations:** Legally, vaccine recommendations are restricted by the amount of time they have been studied. Licensing of the vaccine for a one year or a three year duration, was usually based only on the amount of time “picked” by a human for the study to last. There is much evidence that vaccinations last much longer than we currently believe; with some vaccinations most likely imparting a life long immunity. Since we don’t know for sure, most veterinarians feel most comfortable with “label recommendations”. These label recommendations do not take into account the body’s actual length of immunity.

Currently, I feel most comfortable with this regimen in animals that will be vaccinated: A puppy series appropriate for the dog’s lifestyle, a one year booster of the vaccinations, and then vaccinating every 2-3 years depending on the dog’s exposure risk.

If there are *any* health problems indicating that a dog should not receive vaccinations, I am quick to eliminate them from the pet’s life. Many cities and counties will accept a letter from a veterinarian stating that vaccinations are not recommended for an individual pet, for health reasons.

**This is how a typical puppy within my practice is vaccinated.** This puppy would be nursed on a healthy mom, not leave the house much before 12 weeks of age, and not have exposure to other dogs outside of its home environment or to rescued or fostered animals. This dog’s lifestyle shows me that a conservative vaccination schedule would be appropriate.

- 12-13 weeks of age: Distemper, Adenovirus 2, Parvo Combination Vaccination #1 (Merial Recombitek Brand).

- 3-4 weeks later: Distemper, Adenovirus 2, Parvo Combination Vaccination #2.
- 1-2 months later: Rabies Vaccination – (Merial Imrab 3TF Brand).
- 1 year later: Booster Distemper, Adenovirus 2, Parvovirus. Ideally I would booster Rabies at a separate visit – however I will vaccinate the “one year boosters” at the same time if necessary.
- Future boosters of these vaccinations will be determined for the individual dog – however many studies show that we can now move the vaccines to a schedule of every three years.

Mature dogs in our practice are typically vaccinated every 3 years for Rabies, and every 3 years for the Distemper Combination. I alternate the year that these vaccinations are given in an ideal circumstance. Dogs should still be examined every 6 months to a year whether they are receiving a vaccination or not. Laboratory testing can now replace the cost of previous over-vaccination, and can critically affect the health and longevity of your pet. Finding health issues early is vital. Natural remedies and care work best when conditions are not “too far gone” – which unfortunately is when many people tend to look toward them.

Detoxification and holistic support for animals receiving vaccinations is also important – and will be covered in future newsletters.

As you can see, this is a very long subject to cover! There are important factors to each type of vaccination – Rabies has a Thimerosal Free version, feline vaccinations have an adjuvant free brand, and of course the recommendations for kennel cough, feline leukemia, Lyme disease...all need to be covered. This will be a multiple part series, so that all of it can be covered.



Feel free to contact our office or visit our website for more information on how you can use holistic care for your furry, feathered or finned family. Consultations are available by email and phone to help you to care for the animals in your life naturally, even if you are far away, and not able to come to our “physical location”.

*“Mother Nature gave us the gift of healing. Providing our bodies with the nutrients, substances, and care required to heal, lies in our own actions.”*



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