Pets and their people

Spring Newsletter 2014

In this issue:

Fulham Gardens Vets:
(08) 8355 5475

Unley Vets:
(08) 8272 3400

Black Forest Vets:
(08) 8351 6066

How do vaccines work

Vaccines work by stimulating the immune system to produce antibodies (substances produced by the body to fight disease) without actually infecting us with the disease.

They trigger the immune system to produce its own antibodies, as though the body has been infected with a disease. This is called "active immunity". If the vaccinated animal then comes into contact with the disease itself, their immune system will recognize it and immediately produce the antibodies they need to fight it. This allows your pet to eliminate the disease before it ever establishes an infection in your pet. It takes at least two weeks for this solid protective immunity to develop.

What do we vaccinate against in pets?

Dogs

Distemper (respiratory disease that causes fatal meningitis in 50% of infected dogs)

Infectious hepatitis (viral disease that affects the liver, often leading to liver failure)

Parvovirus (a common disease causing severe sometimes fatal gastroenteritis, and occasionally heart disease)

Canine cough (parainfluenza virus and bordatella bronchoseptica)

Cats

Cat flu

Feline panleukopaenia (causes gastrointestinal disease and severe or fatal anaemia)

Feline Immunodeficiency virus (feline aids)

Feline Leukaemia virus (viral leukaemia)

Chlamydia (upper respiratory disease)

Also remember that unvaccinated animals will be excluded form boarding facilities, and training schools.

Rabbits

RCD (Calicivirus)

How do vaccines work (cont.)

New born animals get immunity from their mother. This is gained in the first 24 hours of life only when the antibodies can be absorbed from the gut. After that they will be broken down by the digestive system and destroyed. These antibodies last for 6-12 weeks and can destroy our vaccines. For this reason we give multiple vaccinations to young animals to try and make sure they have as much protection as possible for the vital first few months of life.

Vaccines can very occasionally cause allergic reactions (which occur rapidly: almost always whilst still in the clinic) and whilst potentially very serious or life threatening can be readily treated. Other links to disease from vaccination, often reported in the media, are tenuous or non existent. In dogs and cats the only generally acknowledged link between vaccines and disease is with feline leukaemia virus vaccination. This is rarely associated with skin tumours at the injection site. This is also noted with rabies vaccination, but we don't vaccinate against rabies in Australia.

If we continue to vaccinate our pets we can eliminate some of the diseases that we vaccinate against. Unfortunately as not all pet owners vaccinate their pets these diseases are allowed to pose a risk to your pet.

Cataracts

Some of the breeds of dog genetically predisposed to cataracts:

Poodle
English Cocker Spaniel
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
Labrador Retriever
Golden Retriever
Kelpie
Bichon Frise
German Shepherd
Beagle
Lhaso Apso
Staffordshire Bull Terrier
Miniature Schnauzer
West Highland White Terrier
Dachshund
Boston Terrier
Irish Setter
Belgian Shepherd
Bedlington Terrier
Bearded Collie
and of course the Entlebucher Sennenhund

Like a camera, eyes have a clear lens inside them that is used for focusing. A cataract is any opacity within a lens. Cataracts can grow and can involve more of the lens (immature cataract) and cause blurred vision. Eventually, the entire lens can become cloudy, and all functional vision lost. This is called a mature cataract. Cataracts are much less common in cats than in dogs.

Cataracts should be differentiated from nuclear sclerosis: an aging change in the lens that occurs in all older dogs, but does not progress to blindness.

Common Causes of Cataracts

- Most cataracts in dogs are inherited, but can develop at any age (they are genetically programmed to develop in these animals)
- Cataracts commonly develop in diabetic dogs, particularly in patients where their blood glucose is hard to control
- Other eye disease can cause toxic changes in the lens that can lead to a cataract
- Eye trauma may rupture the lens capsule, causing a cataract.

What do they mean for your pet?

If your pet develops mature cataracts in both eyes they will become blind. If only one eye is affected they will still be able to see quite adequately. Remember dogs and cats don't read the paper, so vision is more functional for our pets, and less of a quality sense than it is for us. Our pets rely more on sound and smell for communication than vision.

What can I do?

The only way to treat cataracts is to remove them surgically. If both eyes are affected, then a veterinary ophthalmologist should assess your pet. They can test the retinas to see if the rest of the eye is working well. If it is surgery can be performed to remove the affected lens and in most cases vision is returned to your pet.

Generally surgery is only performed on one eye, though in some instances cataracts may be removed from both eyes.

For more information please contact the clinic.

Earliest detection of heart disease

The earliest detection of heart disease can be done at home, by you with no special equipment. And for free.

Left sided congestive heart failure occurs with many of the common cardiac diseases in our pets. When pressure in the top left heart chamber increases and blood backs up into vessels within the lung, it results in fluid accumulating in the lungs. This fluid, called pulmonary oedema, makes it harder to breathe.

So how can you check for it at home?

What you need to measure is your pets resting respiratory rate. How many times do they breathe in a minute. This should be done in a comfortable environment (not too hot or cold) when your pet is fast asleep. Now all you need to do is count how many times the chest wall moves in a minute. Each breath should be quite distinct and easy to count.

What's normal?

Normal values in dogs and cats is less than 30 breaths per minute. If it's less than 30 its normal and your pets heart function is normal. If it's over 30 it may be abnormal. Things other than heart disease can affect the resting respiratory rate. So if your pet has a rate over 30 please contact us as it may be advisable for us to check your pet.

Interesting facts about the Rhinoceros

- The horn of a rhinoceros is made up of strands of matted hair, and can be up to 1.5m long
- They can weigh up to 3 tons
- A group of rhinos is called a "charge"
- White rhinos are not named for their colour. It is probably derived from the Afrikaans word 'weit' meaning wide, and referring to its square lip. The black rhino however is simply, not white.
- Rhinos run at up to 50km per hour
- Calves weigh 50-60kg and are born after a gestation period of about 500 days
- They can live for 35-40 years
- White rhinos graze grass, hence the square lip, whilst black rhinos tend to eat leaves and berries, which they use their more pointed lip to pluck off plants.

Contact us at :
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