

Getting to the core of “non-core” vaccines

What to consider when you are vaccinating your pet



Generally, when you bring in your pet for her annual preventative exam, the veterinary staff often ask a great number of questions . We want to know the details of the kinds of environments your pet is exposed to. We might ask if she ventures on vacation with the family. Is she around other animals? Does she get boarded or groomed? There are many aspects to consider when we are talking about protecting pets from disease.

The questions all lead up to which vaccines should be recommended for your pet. Vaccinations are a key component to the overall health and wellness of our pets. There are a few vaccines that are what we call “core” vaccines. These vaccines are the ones that almost all pets receive.

The rabies and distemper vaccines are core vaccines. The rabies vaccine is mandatory by law to protect your animal in the event that an infected animal bites or scratches him/her. The distemper vaccination is a combination vaccine protecting from several diseases. In dogs, this vaccine protects against distemper, adenovirus-2, parainfluenza and parvovirus. These are fatal diseases that are highly contagious, and can easily be prevented from the vaccine. These are why animal professionals will label these vaccines as the “core” vaccinations.

Non-core vaccines are vaccinations that are suggested considering your lifestyle and environment. Bordatella, influenza, lyme, and leptospirosis are all considered non-core vaccines. There are times when it can be difficult to sort through which vaccines are necessary depending on where you live and the activities you do. Many times people do not feel that their pets are at risk, even though many times they are. Below is a list of the non-core vaccines and what the purpose is for your pet.

- Bordatella- The bordatella vaccine is an oral vaccine that is administered to dogs that are in contact with other dogs or in social situations. The vaccine protects against certain strains of kennel cough. This is typically a mandatory vaccine for boarding and grooming facilities.
- Canine Influenza- This vaccine protects against the canine flu. There are two different strains of canine influenza in the US, H3N2 and H3N8. In 2015 the Chicagoland area had a large outbreak of the H3N2 strain. There are now combination vaccines to protect both strains. Flu symptoms are very similar to upper respiratory symptoms. Again, if your pet is boarding or in other social situations, this is a recommended vaccine.
- Lyme-The lyme vaccine, although is considered a non core vaccine, is becoming more of a regularly administered vaccination. Lyme disease is carried by the blacklegged tick or deer tick. As climates in the US change, ticks are becoming more prevalent in our area. You can find ticks everywhere, including in your own backyard! In the US last year there were 318,000 confirmed cases of lyme disease. Considering this environmental factor, most dogs in Illinois should be receiving the lyme vaccine as part of their annual vaccine protocol.
Preventative flea and tick medications are still necessary due to the fact that these medications rid your pet of ticks. Even if your pet is up to date on the lyme disease, it is not the only disease your pet can get from a tick. In combination with your oral or topical tick preventatives, this vaccine is necessary for any pet that spends any time outdoors.
- Leptospirosis-Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that is spread through the urine of other animals. Most commonly it begins with wildlife urine that ends up in the environment. This infection can affect the liver and kidneys. When left untreated it can be fatal. Unlike the other diseases listed above, leptospirosis can be transferred from dogs to humans. This vaccination is not only important to protect our pets but our people as well!

When considering which vaccines are best for your pet it can be a detailed process to sort out what is necessary protection. Make sure that when you take your pet in for the annual exam you answer all questions as best you can. The risks are out there and vaccines are one of our greatest tools to protect our loved ones. After all South Town Animal Hospital stands by our motto of Healthy Pets, Longer Lives!