

Titers: An Important Tool to Prevent Over Vaccination in Dogs

- Vaccine Articles and News /
- By Dana Scott



In January 2015, several hundred vets made a commitment to end over-vaccination of dogs and cats.

That's a really big deal ... because most pets are vaccinated too often ... and now we finally have a way to put an end to this practice in a way that's affordable for us and acceptable for vets.

If you don't know what a titer is and how it can save your pet's life, do him the favor of reading this article. It can literally save his life.

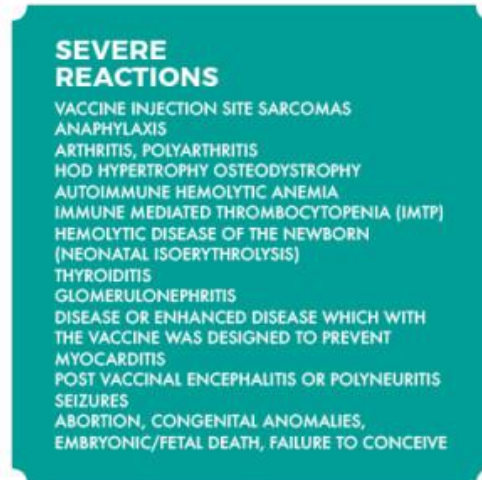
Why Your Dog's Vaccine Can Harm Him

Every pet owner fears infectious disease.

Parvovirus and distemper can be debilitating and even deadly for our pets, so we want to protect them. So, we vaccinate.

But very few of us know that this protection comes at a cost.

Vaccines can be just as harmful to our pets and can cause a wide range of health problems that range from minor fever to anaphylactic shock and cancer. So, it's vital that we vaccinate our pets only when necessary.



The whole idea of vaccination is to protect our pets from harm – and that means protecting them not only from infectious disease, but also protecting from vaccine-induced damage.

I'm going to ask you to do something at the end of this article, so please remember that vaccines can both save lives and take lives.

Why Vets Are Still Over-Vaccinating

Twenty years ago, a very important research piece was published.

Veterinary immunologist, Dr Ronald Schultz studied every major vaccine in over a thousand dogs and every study he did delivered the same conclusion, every time:

“Vaccines for diseases like distemper and canine parvovirus, once administered to adult animals, provide lifetime immunity.” *“Are we vaccinating too much?” JAVMA, No. 4, August 15, 1995, pg. 421.*

At the time this study was released, vets were [vaccinating dogs and cats every year](#) – not because they needed annual boosters, but because the makers of those vaccines only tested them for a few months.

Nobody knew how long vaccines really lasted ...

But thanks to Dr Schultz's work, the major veterinary associations now knew that the core vaccines were extremely likely to protect dogs and cats for life. So, in 2003, they changed their revaccination guidelines.

Now this might sound like a great step forward, but there were two problems with this.

First, the AAHA and AVMA only changed their recommendations from annual to every three years.

Dr Richard Ford, Professor of Medicine, North Carolina State University, a member of the AAHA task force, said this was just a compromise. "It's completely arbitrary...I will say there is no science behind the three-year recommendation..."

So, the veterinary associations are still allowing vets to vaccinate more often than necessary, based on research.

This problem is compounded because the revaccination guidelines are merely recommendations. This means vets can vaccinate whenever they feel is necessary.

And according to a major vaccine manufacturer, 60 percent of vets still vaccinate annually.

"Profits are what vaccine critics believe is at the root of the profession's resistance to update its protocols. Without the lure of vaccines, clients might be less inclined to make yearly veterinary visits. Vaccines add up to 14 percent of the average practice's income, AAHA reports, and veterinarians stand to lose big. I suspect some are ignoring my work," says Schultz. "Tying vaccinations into the annual visit became prominent in the 1980s and a way of practicing in the 1990s. Now veterinarians don't want to give it up."

So, we pet owners are up against it ...

How do we protect our dogs and cats from infectious disease while limiting their risk of vaccine damage?

Titer Testing: Putting Science Behind Vaccination

The first step is to realize that, until recently, vaccine schedules have been based on nothing more than speculation.

But what many pet owners don't understand is that vets have always been able to tell whether a vaccine was needed or not. A simple blood test, called a [titer](#), can show whether your dog is protected and whether he needs another vaccine.

To date, very few of us have been using this life-saving tool.

Why are we so quick to give our dogs life-saving vaccines, but not life-saving titer tests?

Until recently, cost and convenience have been a barrier: titers were expensive and we didn't get results right away ... vets had to draw the blood and send it to a lab first. Maybe that's why vets haven't been offering this life-saving tool to pet owners and have just been giving vaccines instead ... unnecessary and potentially dangerous vaccines.

But recently, that's all changed. Vets and pet owners can finally put an end to dangerous and unscientific vaccine schedules.

Here's how ...

There are [two in-house titer tests that are now available to vets](#). This means the test is done right in your vet's clinic and you get quick results. TiterCHEK and Vaccicheck are the two simple tests your vet can do right in his clinic, for about the same amount of money as a vaccine.

These two tests have been available for some time now but, just like vets are slow to change their vaccine schedules, they're slow to start using titer tests to determine whether your dog actually needs his next vaccine. Some vets would prefer to just give the vaccine ... and that one shot could be the one to cause serious and irreparable damage to your dog.

But you have a choice as the owner of your dog or cat. You can choose to allow your vet to over-vaccinate your pet or you can choose to protect your pet and ask your vet for a titer test instead.

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Get the step-by step guide to safer vaccinations for your dog.

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Which takes me back to the beginning ...

In January 2015, Dr Richard Ford delivered a lecture on titer tests at the NAVC that was so popular, that over 400 vets were lined up out the door to get in. There are vets who care about over-vaccination and the damage it can cause and these vets should be supported.

And you need to do your part too – and your part is the most important!

These 400 vets will only use these titer tests if you ask for it. Don't let this lecture go to waste – ask your vet for a titer test in lieu of your pet's next vaccine. And if your vet doesn't know what a titer test is, send him this link and let her see Dr Ford's lecture below and [PDF handout](#) for herself. If she still doesn't want to do a titer test, then move on to a vet who is willing to go the extra mile to protect your pet from harm.

You also need to know how to interpret titer tests. [Click here to find out what you need to know.](#)

About the Author [Dana Scott](#)

Dana Scott is Editor in Chief for Dogs Naturally Magazine. She also breeds Labrador Retrievers under the Fallriver prefix and has been a raw feeding, natural rearing breeder since the 90's. She is an advocate for natural health care for dogs and people and works tirelessly to educate pet owners so they can influence veterinary medicine and change current vaccine, food and preventive health practices. Visit Dana's Labradors at [Fallriver Labs](#)