
LINDA MAR VETERINARY HOSPITAL/ COASTAL CAT CLINIC



PAW & CLAW PRINTS



Volume 1, Issue 3

August-September 2007

Vaccinations and Guidelines for Dogs and Cats (Part 1 of 3)

Vaccinations are an integral part in maintaining the health of your pet. They are also a source of many questions that you, the client, may or may not fully understand the answers to. You may have always wondered: Exactly what are vaccines-what do they do? How important are booster vaccinations? Why do we administer them in certain locations on your pet? What is a vaccine reaction? Why do I need to get the vaccine 7-10 days before it is therapeutically needed? Why is it important to discuss vaccine protocols with my veterinarian? Are they 100% protective? In an effort to address the many questions associated with canine and feline vaccines, we at Linda Mar Veterinary Hospital and Coastal Cat Clinic are dedicating a three part series in our newsletter to vaccinations.

Recently there has been much discussion about vaccination schedules for cats and dogs. Vaccinations are important as they help protect animals from infectious diseases. Owners and potential owners should discuss vaccination strategies for their pets with their veterinarian. Depending on the lifestyle (indoor/outdoor, multi-cat household, attendance of puppy class and boarding, etc.) and occupation (house, herding, hunting, or hiking companion) your veterinarian can recommend the most effective regimen tailored for your pet.

The purpose of vaccinations is to stimulate an immune response and to generate an appropriate immune memory so that any additional exposure of the animal to the infectious agent will not result in a disease state. In young animals, the presence of the mother's passive immunity may interfere with this process. Because maternally derived antibodies may block an immune response to vaccines in very young puppies and kittens, a series of vaccines are

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Your Pet's Lumps and Bumps

New growths or "lumps" are a very common occurrence, especially in aging pets. Approximately 1/3 of all tumors found in dogs and cats occur on the skin (cutaneous) or just under it (subcutaneous). There are a couple of important questions owners should ask themselves when they find lumps or lesions on their pets. Answering these questions may help your veterinarian evaluate the seriousness of the growth's presence.

- Has the growth appeared suddenly, or has it been there for some time?
- Has the growth stayed the same in consistency and appearance or has it changed recently?
- Does the growth seem freely movable from underlying tissue or is it attached (non-movable)?
- Is there only one lump or are there multiple similar lumps? Does the one growth seem to have many nodules coming from a central source?
- And finally, are there changes in your pet's general health and behavior such as eating less, losing weight, vomiting, diarrhea, or lethargy?

In older dogs, the growths are often benign accumulations of fat known as lipomas. Keep in mind, however, that while all lipomas are lumps, not all lumps are lipomas. Any detected mass should be evaluated for the possibility of a more aggressive malignancy. In general, many benign lumps may grow slowly or not at all and remain unchanged for many months to years. Most malignant masses, however, grow rapidly and may infiltrate into the underlying tissue. The best way to figure out if a growth is benign or malignant is to have your pet examined by a veterinarian.

Many skin tumors, benign or malignant, can be removed surgically if caught early. This, of course, depends on the size and location of the growth. Unfortunately in the case of malignant growths, skin tumors could be just the tip of the iceberg. Further diagnostic tests may be needed to determine if the lump on your pet is the manifestation of a more widespread disease. Aspirates, biopsies, blood work, radiographs and ultrasound are all diagnostic tools used to grade the disease process (tell how much the disease has progressed locally and systemically).

Canine Mast Cell Tumor

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given at appropriate age intervals when the mother's immunity has waned. This protocol will result in active immunity against the



vaccine and naturally found antigens. Other aspects such as poor nutritional status, concurrent disease, and stress may also interfere with establishing a suitable immune response. With these factors the vaccine may not be efficacious, or in rare cases may cause disease.

At what age should one begin vaccinating puppies and kittens? As there is no transfer of maternal antibodies through the placenta to the fetus, puppies and kittens are born with almost no antibodies. Protection is provided by ingestion of colostrum (mother's first milk) antibodies during the first days of life. As maternally derived antibody titers decline in kittens and puppies, their immune system develops further. We begin puppy and kitten vaccines at 6-8 weeks of age.

The interval between the **first series of booster vaccinations** should be between 3 and 4 weeks because vaccines can interfere with each other. When your pet is given a vaccine virus, cells increase interferon (blocking) cell production. Therefore, if the second vaccine is given within a week to ten days, it will most likely fail. Delays longer than 6-8 weeks should be avoided because of the failure to induce and maintain a proper immune response. If this does occur, the series should be started over. The exception is the rabies vaccine, in which long-term immunity studies indicate efficacy of boosters after 1 year.

Vaccines reach appropriate efficacy in your pet's body 7-10 days after administration. So, if a Bordatella (Kennel Cough) vaccine is needed to protect your dog while boarding in two days, not enough time is given for the vaccine to protect him. He may still develop Kennel Cough. Also note vaccines do not induce the same amount of protection in all animals. Each animal should be regarded as an individual. Even when given appropriately most vaccines do not induce complete 100% protection from either infection or disease. If any infectious process does manifest, it is most likely controllable subtle disease. Vaccines are the closest veterinary medicine has gotten to the elimination of some infectious diseases. Coupled with general wellness, vaccines are still a first line of defense preventing infectious diseases in your pet. 🐾

[Part 2: Next issue will address Feline Vaccine Protocols, Placement and Fibrosarcomas]

The most common malignant skin cancer in dogs is the mast cell tumor. Mast cells are normal cells in the body that serve as a defense mechanism. When you are bitten by a mosquito, for instance, the mast cells initiate the inflammatory response that causes the production of a red and itchy hive. If the normal mast cell undergoes a malignant change, a mast cell tumor may be produced. Canine mast cell tumors may possess varying degrees of malignancy. Malignancies range from local recurrence following surgical removal to aggressive systemic disease, which may ultimately be fatal. Although mast cell tumors primarily affect the skin, they have the potential to spread to other areas of the body. Therefore, it is important not only to address the skin tumor, but also to fully evaluate the pet for signs of metastasis (spread). If there is no evidence of tumor metastasis, surgical removal of the mast cell tumor may cure the problem. If complete surgical removal is not possible, radiation therapy or chemotherapy can be considered adjunctively.

Feline Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

Squamous Cell Carcinoma in cats most often occurs in sun-damaged skin. It begins as a crusted area that develops into an ulcerated lesion. The most common sites are unpigmented (albino) or underpigmented (white) areas exposed to continued sunlight. These areas include the nose, ears, eyelids and muzzle. In approximately half of the cats affected, multiple lesions occur. It is usually locally aggressive (metastasis is rare), but the damage is extensive. Like all cancers, treatment options are most successful with small lesions early in the disease process. Timely detection is key. As an important preventative, all felines with a higher probability of developing SCC should avoid continued contact with direct sunlight. Also, sunscreen can be applied to most unpigmented and underpigmented areas to help limit sun exposure.

When you notice a lump or bump on your pet, it is best to have him examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible. Many pets have growths that remain benign all of their lives, but if a mass is malignant, your pet has a better prognosis if treated early. The best way to detect lumps at any stage is to give your pet full body rubs on a regular basis. Not only are you contributing to your pet's health and your own peace of mind, your pet is going to love the attention! 🐾

SPECIAL EVENTS, SERVICES AND PROMOTIONS

🌞 WEEKLY LOW-COST DOG VACCINE CLINIC:

Every Tuesday evening from 7:00-8:00pm; NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

We offer DHPP, Rabies, Lyme, and Bordatella (Kennel Cough) vaccines; Heartworm Testing also available.

