Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease which causes loss of appetite, sickness, coughing and serious liver and/or kidney disease, appetite loss, sickness, and diarrhoea. Other symptoms include coughing, difficulty breathing, pneumonia and skin infections. Many cats remain carriers of these viruses acting as a source of infection for other cats.

Feline infectious enteritis (FIV, feline panleucopaenia)
Feline infectious enteritis virus causes severe sickness and diarrhoea, or death. It can cause severe vomiting and diarrhoea. Infected cats die due to other uncontrolled infections, progressive anaemia, or through the development of tumours (lymphoma) or leukaemia. FIV cannot survive outside of the cat for long and is spread from queen to kitten or by direct contact between cats e.g. via exchange of saliva (grooming/bites).

Feline chlamydiosis (Chlamydia felis, feline chlamydophila infection)
Infection results in conjunctivitis and discharge from the eyes and nose with sneezing and is most common in kittens and young cats from multi-cat households. This disease is caused by a very delicate organism which cannot survive in the environment and is transmitted only by direct contact between cats.

Further information
The VMD produces a number of Veterinary Medicines Guidance Notes (VMGN’s) and other information, which are available on the VMD website www.vmd.defra.gov.uk. There is also a series of information leaflets available, e.g.

The Work of the VMD
• Availability of Veterinary Medicines
• Is this Medicine Safe for my Pet?
• How to identify Veterinary Medicinal Products: Legal or Illegal?
• Pharmacovigilance
• VMD’s Accredited Internet Retailer Scheme

You can also phone the VMD on 01932 336911 for any additional assistance about veterinary medicines. Alternatively email us at: postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

Some of the available dog vaccines contain these letters in their brand names. The abbreviations mean:

- D – distemper
- H – canine hepatitis (adenovirus)
- P – parvovirus
- L – leptospirosis
- Pi – parainfluenza

Distemper
Distemper virus is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death. If the dog shows signs of fever, coughing, or runny nose, it will need treatment with antibiotics. If the disease is not treated, it can cause damage to the nervous system and death. If the disease is treated early, the chance of recovery is high.

Canine hepatitis virus – (Adenovirus)
Canine hepatitis is a potentially fatal disease, most commonly found in young, unvaccinated pups. It causes coughing and sneezing, weight loss and loss of appetite.

Parvovirus (Parvo)
Parvovirus is most likely to infect pups up to six months of age, but can infect older dogs and is often fatal in the very young and old. It causes severe vomiting and blood-stained diarrhoea, high temperature and discharge from the eyes. The dog may develop fever, diarrhea, and sudden death from damage to the heart can occur. It is easily spread by contact with urine from infected dogs.

Leptospirosis
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Information correct at time of writing: January 2014

Withdrawn - 2016/232 - 09/12/16
Who can supply vaccines for dogs and cats?

All vaccines for immunising dogs or cats are categorised as POM-V (Prescription Only Medicine-Veterinary Surgeon). That means they may only be supplied on prescription by a veterinary surgeon after they have made a clinical assessment of the animal(s) concerned.

What about ‘side effects’, ‘adverse events’ and the reported dangers from over vaccinating?

It is extremely rare for any serious side effects to follow vaccinations. Mild reactions such as animals being a little quiet or off their food for a day or so are possible but are short lived. Any adverse effect is generally far outweighed by the benefit of protection against serious disease. The independent Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) reviewed all UK-label dog and cat vaccines between 1999 and 2002. They concluded: “Vaccination plays a very valuable role in the prevention and control of major infectious diseases in cats and dogs.” Although adverse events usually follow vaccination, including the suspected failure to work well, the VPC concluded that the ‘overall risk/benefit analysis strongly supports their continued use’.

The VMD’s assessment of vaccines is based on the product’s benefits and risks shown by scientific data on the product’s safety and effectiveness. The VMD bases its decision on the manufacturer’s data on the products safety and effectiveness, any possible side effects on the likelihood of benefits and the animal’s health and disease status. The VMD assesses each medicine product’s SPC (Summary of Product Characteristics) will recommend a re-vaccination interval. Other factors which your vet will take into account when recommending a vaccination schedule for your individual pet may include:

• duration of immunity
• overall risk/benefit analysis
• nutritional and health status of the pup/kitten
• whether or not the pup/kitten is in contact with other animals
• at the time of vaccination the health and disease status of the animal(s) concerned
• how healthy your pet is at the moment
• how much your pet is naturally exposed to the disease
• how large these risks are
• the level of risk from disease that the pup/kitten faces in its particular circumstances
• the nutritional and health status of the pup/kitten
• the type of animal and whether it is healthy
• the nutritional and health status of any other animals that the pup/kitten will come in contact with

Travelling abroad with your pet

Pets must have an effective rabies vaccine (and other medications) if travelling to a rabies risk country or to countries where rabies is considered endemic. The VMD wants to know about such cases too and either you or your vet can report them to the manufacturer or to us directly on-line via our website at www.vmd.defra.gov.uk.

How do I know that the vaccines are safe?

All vaccines in the UK are rigorously tested for safety. The products must be shown to work well, the VPC concluded that the ‘overall risk/benefit analysis strongly supports their continued use’.

Why do all dogs and cats get the same vaccine dose, whatever their size, or breed?

When we give a dose of vaccine we give enough to stimulate the body’s immune system to generate a protective response. The immune system in fact needs the same degree of stimulus regardless of the body mass or breed. So we usually need to use exactly the same dose of vaccine for a Chihuahua as for a Mastiff. The same principle applies to cats, which is why the same dose can be given to an adult cat or small puppy.

It is different when we give medicines such as antibiotics or wormers. The effect of these often depends on getting a certain concentration of the active ingredient into the body of the animal. For this reason the larger the animal, the greater the total dose needed to achieve the required effect.

What is ‘Onset of immunity’?

This is the time between the vaccine being given and the animal mounting an immune response by producing enough antibodies to protect itself from the disease in question.

Why should I vaccinate my pet?

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (an Executive Agency of Defra) regulates all veterinary medicines in the UK, including vaccines. Before any vaccine can be sold in the UK it must pass a strict, independent, scientific assessment. We make sure it is good quality and safe for the animals, for those giving the vaccine and for the environment. We make sure it also effective in giving pets protection for a minimum defined period. Details of the way veterinary medicines can be used and their main characteristics can be found on the Product’s Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC), a publicly available document produced following the authorisation of a veterinary medicine. SPCs are available for all UK-registered veterinary medicines are available through the VMD’s product information database on our website www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductsInformationDatabase.

How do you vaccinate young puppies and kittens?

Vaccination primes your pet’s immune system on how to produce the correct antibodies quickly. If your pet then comes into contact with one of the diseases, its immune system will recognise it and immediately produce the antibodies needed to fight the disease. A pet may fail to gain enough immunity from a vaccine for a number of reasons which may include the use of other medicines, disease present in the pet, and the reported dangers from over vaccinating. Your pet’s vaccination schedule is right for them.

What is ‘Duration of immunity’?

‘Duration of immunity’ is the length of time the immune system generates enough antibodies to protect the animal from the disease. We allow recommended intervals to allow for the normal immune system to generate the protective response. The immune system is not mature at birth and takes time to develop and to react to challenges from local organisms. MDA are important in allowing the immune system to ‘learn’ from the diseases that are normally more ‘stimulating’ and ‘memorable’ to the immune system than others. We now consider that immunity to canine parvovirus, infectious canine hepatitis and canine distemper usually lasts for up to four years and some studies suggest it may be longer. For rabies and paracoccidioidomycosis in cats immunity is usually considered to last for three years. However, immunity to cat ‘flu, leprosporis or kennel cough may only last for 12 months.

How do I know that the vaccines are safe?

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (an Executive Agency of Defra) regulates all veterinary medicines in the UK, including vaccines. Before any vaccine can be sold in the UK it must pass a strict, independent, scientific assessment. We make sure it is good quality and safe for the animals, for those giving the vaccine and for the environment. We make sure it also effective in giving pets protection for a minimum defined period. Details of the way veterinary medicines can be used and their main characteristics can be found on the Product’s Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC), a publicly available document produced following the authorisation of a veterinary medicine. SPCs are available for all UK-registered veterinary medicines are available through the VMD’s product information database on our website www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductsInformationDatabase.

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