



CAYMAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Vaccinations

Overview

Vaccines contain viruses, bacteria or other disease-causing organisms that have been killed or altered so that they can no longer cause disease. Newer vaccines may contain genetically engineered components derived from those disease agents. When given to an animal, vaccines will stimulate the body's immune system to form disease fighting cells and proteins (known as antibodies) to protect against the disease. Although the protection afforded by vaccines can be reduced by poor health and poor nutrition, most vaccinated animals will be resistant to the disease for which they are fully vaccinated.

How are vaccines given?

Most vaccines are given by injection, either under the skin or into the muscle. Some vaccines may be administered as drops into the nostril.

Are vaccines safe?

Although vaccines are considered very safe, they can still cause reactions in a small number of pets. Most commonly, your pet may feel tired, may run a fever for 24 to 48 hours after vaccination, and may not eat. In some pets, a small, non-painful lump may form at the site where the vaccine was injected; usually disappearing 4 weeks later. Rarely, pet's may develop facial swelling or a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), accompanied by



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vomiting, diarrhea, breathing difficulties and collapse. Intense facial itchiness may also occur. Anaphylactic reactions are rarely fatal if treated immediately and appropriately.

Are there alternatives to vaccinations?

There are no alternatives to vaccination. Despite the occasional risks associated with vaccination, it is universally accepted that vaccination plays an important role in protecting pets. However, some owners may be disinclined to have their pet vaccinated frequently. For some repeat vaccines, blood samples can measure antibody titers. Though these may not always provide solid evidence of immunity, some clinicians use them as an indicator, along with low risk, that vaccines may be administered at a longer than annual revaccination interval. At this time, not all laboratories are standardized to allow accurate interpretation of results, nor can immunity to all diseases be tested this way.

Community health does require vaccination as a strategy to control disease outbreak.