



NORTHPARK Animal Hospital

BOOSTER VACCINES – ARE THEY REALLY NECESSARY?

Primary (puppy and kitten) vaccination is essential in order to prevent the once common puppyhood and kittenhood fatal diseases from returning. However, recent research indicates that all vaccines may not require yearly booster vaccines.

If you have any concerns in this area please do not hesitate to discuss them with us. The problem is one of risk and benefits. There is no evidence that annual booster vaccination is anything but beneficial to the majority of pets. To establish whether boosters are really necessary, blood tests to measure the amount of antibodies present in your pet are necessary. Unfortunately, these are usually more stressful and certainly more expensive than a simple revaccination. Published research has shown conclusively that omitting to re-inoculate against some of the major diseases can put some pets at risk.

Vaccines are regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Vaccine manufacturers must prove that the vaccine is safe and effective before it can be used in your pet. Through vigilance and high standards, the veterinary vaccines used today are the safest and most protective ever.

I would prefer my pet to have boosters only when necessary. Is this possible?

It is possible but the level of immunity against any of the preventable diseases has to be established by individual blood tests. That immunity has to be boosted and cost factors have to be considered. The inoculation against a single disease is likely to cost as much as a multivalent vaccine and at present there is no scientific evidence that annual multivalent boosters actually cause harm. From your pet's point of view, it is preferable to receive one injection against the common diseases rather than a series of single disease inoculations.

Are there any other advantages of annual vaccination?

The annual health examination involves not only vaccinations but, more importantly, a thorough health check – ears, eyes, heart and chest are all examined. Diseases of the mouth and teeth, ear, heart and other problems are frequently detected during this examination and can be successfully treated because of early diagnosis.

Deciding which vaccinations your pet receives should be based on your pet's lifestyle, age and health status. Our trained veterinary healthcare team can help guide you through this decision-making process to ensure that your pet receives the highest standard of care and protection.