

Vaccination Guidelines

Vaccinations are the cornerstone of infectious disease prevention for your pet. The American Animal Hospital Association has established guidelines for appropriate vaccinations of companion animals. Vaccines are divided into two categories: Core vaccinations, which are necessary for all pets regardless of lifestyle, and Non-Core vaccinations, which are recommended based on risk factors.

Core Vaccinations:

- **Rabies:** This vaccination is required by law. Rabies is transmitted by direct contact with the saliva of an infected animal and is almost 100% fatal if contracted. Raccoons and bats, skunks, foxes and woodchucks are all important rabies vectors in Rhode Island. Vaccination begins at 12 weeks of age and is boosted yearly for cats and every 3 years for dogs that are not overdue on their vaccine.
- **Canine and Feline Distemper vaccinations (DHPP, FVRCP):** These viruses can cause fatal intestinal, neurologic, respiratory and liver diseases. Vaccination begins at 6 weeks of age and continues every 3-4 weeks until puppies and kittens four months of age. It is then administered every three years thereafter.

Non-Core Vaccinations (Dogs):

- **Lyme:** Lyme disease is transmitted by infected ticks and is extremely prevalent in New England. This vaccine is appropriate for any dog that is exposed to ticks. The most effective way to prevent transmission of Lyme disease is a combination of vaccination and a reliable flea & tick preventative.
- **Leptospirosis:** This disease is transmitted by the urine of infected animals and can be found in wildlife, livestock and rodent populations. It can cause kidney and liver failure and even death. Infected pets can also transmit disease to their human owners. This vaccine is appropriate for dogs that frequent stagnant bodies of water, muddy areas, have exposure to rodents, or spend time in areas frequented by wildlife or near farmland as these are the places where this bacterium readily grows.
- **Bordetella:** This vaccine protects against one of the causative agents of infectious tracheobronchitis, also known as "Kennel Cough". This disease can cause anything from a mild cough to severe pneumonia. The Bordetella vaccine is appropriate for dogs that are around other dogs such as when they go to the groomer, dog park, day care, group training classes, or boarding facilities.
- **Canine Influenza:** This is a highly contagious respiratory infection which causes coughing, sneezing, lethargy, fever and even pneumonia. Vaccination is appropriate for dogs that are around other dogs such as when they go to the groomer, dog park, day care, group training classes, or boarding facilities.

Non-Core Vaccinations (Cats):

- **Leukemia:** This virus can affect a cat's body in a multitude of ways. It can cause cancers to form, various blood disorders and is fatal. This vaccine is recommended for all cats that go outdoors.