

The subject of vaccinations for dogs and cats is one that no doubt concerns many of our readers. I would say questions on this topic are among those most frequently asked at our clinic. In this issue, therefore, we have brought together all the basic points regarding vaccination that pet owners ought to know.

Inoculations currently being given are the rabies vaccine and combination vaccine for dogs, and the combination vaccine and feline leukemia virus vaccine for cats.

The diseases these vaccines prevent are given in the table below. All of them, if contracted, are dangerous as they carry extremely severe symptoms and are difficult to treat. Excepting rabies, they are all quite prevalent. Inoculating the animals with the vaccines creates antibodies in their systems and raises immunity against the diseases before they are encountered. This means the animal will be immune to those diseases when they are exposed to them, and even on the off-chance it does contract one of them, the symptoms will be much lighter and easier to treat.

Dogs Combination Vaccine

Distemper
Adenovirus Type 1 (Canine Hepatitis)
Adenovirus Type 2
Canine Parainfluenza
Parvo
Leptospirosis
Rabies Vaccine

Cats Combination Vaccine

Feline Panleucopenia Virus (Parvo)
Feline Herpesvirus
Feline Calicivirus
Feline Leukemia Virus Vaccine

Vaccinations must be made periodically to remain effective. The initial inoculation should be given before the age of four months, with booster shots afterwards to keep immune levels sufficiently high. So how often should your pet be vaccinated?

Newborn puppies and kittens receive immunity from their mother due to antibodies that are transmitted with her milk. This immunity protects puppies and kittens from a wide variety of diseases until they are weaned and begin to fend for themselves. If a young animal is inoculated while the transmitted antibodies remain in its system, these attack the vaccine and destroy it, making it useless. Meanwhile, the period of time the transmitted antibodies remain effective ranges from a few weeks after birth to several months, depending on the strength of the mother's immunity, the types of disease the antibodies fight, and the offspring's health.

Consequently, although a puppy or kitten ideally should receive its first inoculation when the mother's immunity (transmitted antibodies) wears off, this is hard to measure. At our clinic, our general guideline

for the dogs' combination vaccine is between seven and nine weeks after birth for the initial inoculation, with booster shots given at three months and a little after four months of age, for a total of three times. The point here is to give the third vaccination sometime after four months of age, when the mother's antibodies are definitely no longer present.

Care should be taken that your pet does not come into contact with a diseased animal until it has received this third vaccination. We have seen cases where a puppy that received its first two inoculations was infected by the Parvo virus just days before receiving its third inoculation. So consider your pet vulnerable until the third vaccination has been given, and exercise caution.

* Some recently developed vaccines are effective even while the mother's antibodies remain in the system, giving full protection against disease before the age of four months. When these vaccines should be given differs according to type, so please discuss this with your vet.

Once your puppy or kitten has safely received its first three vaccinations, it will still require an annual booster shot to maintain its immunity levels. The best time would probably be autumn to early winter, when dogs and cats tend to be at their most robust. It is much harder for older animals to build immunity, so if your pet is aged eight years or older, the annual booster shot is especially important. Also, animals are more vulnerable to disease when they are weak, as after an operation or giving birth, so for this reason also, immune levels should be maintained with regular inoculations once a year.

* Recent research into the duration of immunity has led to debate about how often booster shots are required. Given the low rate of vaccination in Japan today, however, we believe it is important to maintain sufficiently high immunity through once-yearly booster shots.

Vets will check your pet's health before giving a vaccination, so this is also a good opportunity to bring up any problems you may have noticed. Nutritional imbalances and the presence of parasites can affect the ability to build immunity as well, so fecal testing, deworming and improved diet are important if these are found to be problems. Also, if your pet has diarrhoea or fever, these must be treated before vaccination can take place.

Your pet is a cherished member of your family make sure it receives the protection it needs against disease with regular vaccinations.

* There are reports that rabies may have entered Japan from abroad. Make sure your dog receives annual rabies vaccinations after the age of three months, as required by law.

* Before being vaccinated against the feline leukemia virus, your cat should first be checked for the presence of antibodies.



UK-JAPAN GREEN ALLIANCE 2002



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902, which was to connect the two countries at that time, politically and militarily. To commemorate this event, towns and villages across Japan with some links to Britain will receive UK-born oak trees.

ARK received its oak tree and on April 29th we had a small tree planting ceremony attended by Gary Leslie from the British Embassy together with ARK staff and volunteers. We hope that the tree will grow big and strong and be a reminder of the links between Britain and Japan, as well as providing greenery and shade for our animals and visitors.

2002年4月29日に英国大使館よりガーリィレスリ氏によって英国生まれのオークがARKにやって来ました。2002年はかつて英国と日本の間で結ばれた日英同盟の100周年にあたります。英国大使館が日本全国約170ヶ所で展開する植樹活動「日英グリーン同盟」(uk-japan green alliance)には、日本と英国の関係がより広く・より深く・より堅いものになってもらいたいという願いがこめられています。