

# FEATURE MEDICINE: VACCINES FOR CATS & DOGS



Vaccines are medicines that help protect cats and dogs from some of the most serious diseases by training their immune systems to fight off harmful germs like viruses and bacteria. Vaccines are usually given as an injection and help prevent infectious diseases that are highly contagious or can cause serious or life-threatening illness.

Vaccines are usually given to puppies and kittens when they are desexed. Some veterinary service providers may also offer vaccines for older animals that owners can pay for.

It's important to remember that vaccines can't treat a disease if the cat or dog is already sick. They need to be given to healthy animals to help prevent them from future infections.

## How do Vaccines Work?

Vaccines protect dogs and cats from dangerous diseases by teaching their immune systems to recognise and fight off the infection. Just like in people, vaccines in dogs and cats contain a small, harmless part of a germ that tricks the body's immune system into

creating **antibodies**, just like it would if the dog or cat was exposed to the disease. In this way, if the dog or cat ever encounters the real disease, their immune system remembers the virus or bacteria and fights it off before it makes the animal sick.



## What Are Antibodies?

Antibodies are proteins in the blood that help to fight germs like viruses and bacteria. When a germ gets inside your body, your immune system will start to make antibodies for that germ. These antibodies stick to the germ and keep them from making you sick.

Once you have antibodies for a specific type of germ, antibodies will help to protect you if the same germ enters your body again.



## What Vaccines Do Dogs and Cats Need?

Vaccines are recommended for dogs and cats starting at 8 weeks of age and continuing throughout their lifetime. The type of vaccines a dog or cat needs depends on their age, lifestyle and the types of germs that can be found in your area. Vaccines that are recommended for all cats and dogs are described below. These vaccines are often combined in a single injection to make the process easier and less stressful for the pet. These medicines should only be given by a veterinarian.

### What Vaccines are Recommended for All Dogs?

Three vaccines are recommended for all dogs: canine distemper virus, canine parvovirus, canine adenovirus.

- **Canine Distemper** is a virus that can make dogs very sick. It can affect their breathing, tummy and brain. Dogs with distemper may cough, vomit or have seizures and can even die from the sickness.
- **Canine Parvovirus** is a serious and life-threatening disease, especially for puppies. This virus makes the dog's tummy and intestines very sick and causes vomiting and diarrhoea.
- **Canine Adenovirus** is a virus that can cause serious liver disease in dogs. It can make them vomit, have diarrhoea, and turn the white part of their eyes yellow.



### What Vaccines are Recommended for All Cats?

Three vaccines are recommended for all cats: feline herpesvirus, feline calicivirus and feline panleukopenia virus.

- **Feline Herpesvirus** is a common virus that causes “cat flu.” Cats with this virus may sneeze a lot, have a runny nose, or have watery eyes.
- **Feline Calicivirus** is another virus that causes “cat flu” and can make cats sneeze or have runny noses. It can also cause mouth sores or a high fever. Mouth sores can make it hard for cats to eat.
- **Feline Panleukopenia** is a serious and life-threatening disease, especially in young kittens. This virus makes the cat's tummy and intestines very sick and causes vomiting and diarrhea. It also makes it hard for them to fight off other germs.