

"Vaccinating Your Pet"

Question: *I have four cats and two dogs. Until recently, I have had them vaccinated regularly. Please let me know what you would recommend to someone who has cats and dogs and wants to keep them safe but does not want to either endanger them or spend money unnecessarily.*

Answer: *The veterinary profession has spent the past six to seven years reexamining and discussing vaccine duration of immunity and revising vaccination protocols accordingly to make sure that companion animals get care that is tailored to their lifestyles. The goal is to make sure that an individual's vaccine protocol is protecting them from risks they face, without vaccinating unnecessarily.*

For example, in our practice we ask cat owners to describe whether their cats ever go outdoors or whether they are exclusively indoors and what other animals they might come in contact with. If a cat is exclusively indoors, we design a different vaccine protocol than if it goes out regularly or "escapes" with any frequency. Dogs that go to boarding facilities, grooming parlors or doggie daycares will have different recommendations than dogs that do not. The days of designing a single vaccine protocol for an entire species are over.

Good communication is the best tool in designing protocols that are proper for your pets. I suggest having a discussion with a veterinarian in your area, giving all of the information you know about your pets' lifestyles. With that information, your veterinarian can explain what vaccinations he or she would recommend, at what frequency and why. At that point you can make an informed decision on a vaccination protocol designed specifically for your pet.

This question was answered by AAHA member Dr. Merry Crimi of Gladstone Veterinary Clinic in Milwaukie, Oregon