VACCINE REACTIONS

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With vaccination commonly recommended annually, most pet owners are accustomed to taking their pets to the vet for "yearly shots." It seems such a commonplace part of routine pet care that many people do not think about what is actually occurring within their pet’s body. In fact, immunization represents stimulation of the immune system, an inherently inflammatory process. It is typical for some joint or muscle soreness to occur after vaccination, for lethargy to be observed, or for a mild fever to be present for a day or two. These reactions are not serious and generally go unnoticed. Pets may eat, drink, and exercise normally after vaccination if they want to; it is the more serious allergic reactions that need to be distinguished from the above expected phenomena.

ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Allergic reactions are highly individual inflammatory responses against specific proteins entering the body. These proteins can be pollens, dusts, foods, medications, or even vaccines. The time frame after vaccination can be immediate (the "Type I" reaction) or anytime in the next 48 hours (the "Type IV" or "Delayed Hypersensitivity" reaction.) An allergic reaction might include hives, facial swelling, or even nausea. More serious reactions can include shock or sudden death ("anaphylaxis").

WHAT TO DO DURING A REACTION

If your pet is having a reaction more severe than just some general malaise or soreness, you should let your veterinarian know right away. Vomiting may be a sign of an on-coming serious reaction, or could represent something as mild as car sickness. If vomiting is observed, let your veterinarian know right away. Anti-inflammatory injections can be used to halt the inflammatory cascade before it gets dangerously out of hand. Be sure you know who to call in case of problems after your pet is vaccinated. If it is after-hours, it is prudent to consult the local emergency clinic. Local emergency clinic contact information is listed on the back of this brochure.

WHAT TO DO IN THE FUTURE FOR THE PET WHO HAS HAD REACTIONS
There are many steps that can be taken to prevent allergic vaccine reactions:

**AVOID LEPTOSPIROSIS VACCINE**

The leptospirosis portion of the DHLPP (distemper) vaccine for dogs has a reputation for being the most likely portion to cause vaccine reactions. You can request that this portion be left out of your dog’s vaccine.

**AVOID GIVING SEVERAL VACCINATIONS AT ONE TIME**

We recommend giving only one vaccine at a time. This minimizes the challenge to your pet's immune system and, in the event of a vaccine reaction, allows the veterinarian to determine which vaccine may be problematic for your pet. If your pet needs both a rabies vaccine and a DHLPP vaccine, we suggest that you separate these vaccines by at least two weeks.

**DO NOT HAVE YOUR PET VACCINATED AT A VACCINE CLINIC**

Our vaccine clinic is designed to provide streamlined service for healthy pets in need of their regular immunizations. Pets who have a history of vaccination reaction should only be vaccinated under the supervision of a veterinarian. A pet with a vaccine reaction history should receive some special attention in the form of observation in the hospital and/or pre-treatment with anti-inflammatory medication. If you are aware a vaccine reaction in your pet’s past, please schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to booster your pet’s vaccines.

**BE SURE YOUR VETERINARIAN IS AWARE OF YOUR PET’S HISTORY OF VACCINE REACTION**

We have seen many people at vaccination clinics wait until after the animal has been vaccinated before informing our staff that the pet has a history of reactions. It may sound obvious, but it is important to bring any adverse history to the attention of your veterinarian before your pet is vaccinated.

**BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR EXTRA PRE-MEDICATIONS AND/OR OBSERVATION IN THE HOSPITAL**

Medications can be used to "head off" allergic reactions before they happen and with the use of these medications it is possible that a reacting pet can be vaccinated normally. To be safe, it is frequently recommended that the pet be observed for the day after vaccination, despite the medication. Consult your veterinarian regarding his/her recommendation.

**A FINAL NOTE**

Vaccination reactions severe enough to produce shock are EXTREMELY rare and are a function of an individual pet's immune response. Vaccination is an important part of responsible pet ownership and should not be omitted without specific veterinary guidance.