

Vaccinating Dogs: 10 Steps to Eliminating Unnecessary Shots

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When vaccinating our dogs, most of us rely on our vets, trusting that their advice is up-to-date and not biased by economic or political concerns. Unfortunately, unless vets stay current on veterinary journal reading (no easy task) ... *and* actually assimilate new findings ... *and* decide to forgo significant vaccination income, their advice may lag well behind many years behind what experts now advocate.

Vaccination is a serious medical procedure with the potential for adversely affecting health, both in the short and long term. Experts now advise us to vaccinate each dog according to his or her individual needs. But how do you cut back without endangering your dog's health? Here are 10 ways to eliminate unnecessary shots while actually *improving* pet health.

1. Always consider locale, lifestyle, risk and vaccine effectiveness. Bordetella (kennel cough) is for dogs in poorly-ventilated close quarters (like kennels), not for pets sometimes playing with others. Leptospirosis is a disease of wetlands and woodlands, and the vaccine may not protect against the actual disease in your area. Lyme is only for dogs in areas with Lyme disease. Furthermore, each of these vaccines has dangerous side effects and their efficacy is questionable. Don't give them without proven need and benefit.

2. Eliminate vaccines on the “not recommended” list of the American Hospital Association's [Canine Vaccine Task Force](#) as well as most veterinary organizations and schools. These include Giardia and Coronavirus (found in many combination shots).

3. Say no! to combination shots. Combo shots (called names like DHLPPC) assault your dog's immune system with five or seven vaccines at once. Given for (false) economy and convenience rather than health or safety, combination shots are linked to autoimmune disease and other major health problems. Also, they invariably contain unnecessary and even dangerous vaccines.

4. Stop vaccinating against diseases for which your dog may already have immunity. Blood serological studies show that parvovirus vaccines given to dogs over 15-16 weeks of age generally give *at least* 7 years of immunity, as does the Rockborn distemper strain. (The Onderstepoort strain gives 5 years.) Ask your vet which vaccine your dog received.

5. Don't allow your vet, kennel owner or groomer to intimidate you into giving unnecessary shots. Suggest titer testing for parvovirus or distemper — or go elsewhere. Require written proof from experts that your dog needs any shot. Your dog's lifelong health is at stake.

6. Test immunity; don't automatically re-vaccinate. Titer tests (pronounced TIGHT er) are blood tests measuring antibodies to disease. Renowned pet vaccination expert Dr. Ron Schultz believes that titer tests yielding strong titers for parvovirus and distemper means not vaccinating against these diseases for years and maybe life. (Note: Don't expect everyone to accept test results in lieu of vaccination. This subject is complicated, and most people are programmed to think of vaccination as "the gold standard." Also, the *absence* of strong titers does not necessarily mean that a dog needs a "booster.") Read my article on [titer testing](#) here at Truth4Dogs.com for details.

7. Never vaccinate sick dogs. All vaccine labels state that they're to be used in healthy animals. Unfortunately, vaccine labels don't define "healthy" and most clients don't know about this admonition. As a result, sick pets, immune-compromised pets, pets undergoing chemo and surgery, and even dying housebound pets are vaccinated. Any shots given to an unhealthy animal may well not provide immunity and will likely cause an adverse reaction, even death. Regarding the rabies vaccine: chronically ill or immune-compromised pets may be eligible for a [rabies shot exemption](#) for a specified period or even life. Click the preceding link for more information. And watch for our upcoming post on this subject.

8. Don't vaccinate puppies too early. Vaccinating pups who still have maternal immunity is unnecessary and ineffective. Most vets suggest waiting until at least 8 weeks of age. Some experts suggest waiting until 3-4 months to [vaccinate puppies](#), keeping pups away from public places and strange dogs until immunity is proven by strong [titers](#).

9. Insist that your vet documents any adverse vaccine reactions in detail. Someday you may want to apply for rabies vaccine exemption.

10. Make copies of dog licenses and vet files and store them in a safe place. Clinics lose records, go out of business, leave town, etc. Without your dog's records, you may have vaccinate sooner than necessary because of lost or missing records.

Ready to make a change? Best case, [find a vet](#) concerned about over-vaccinating to advise you. Educate yourself and go to the vet armed with information. Most important: actually advocate for your dog; don't just *intend* to advocate. (If you have trouble keeping your resolve, watch my video [Stand Up to Your Vet](#).) Learn more, and watch our video on vaccination, at my web page [Vaccinating Dogs](#).