



# A simple guide to planning your pet's vaccination

An important part of being a responsible pet owner is to have your dog or cat vaccinated against preventable diseases. Vaccination is one of the most commonly performed procedures in small animal veterinary practice, and with good reason. Vaccination not only assists to protect them from potentially life-threatening diseases by boosting their immunity, but also saves you from [high treatment costs](#) and the heartache of seeing your pet suffer. Keeping your pet's vaccinations up to date is an essential step for them to remain happy and healthy.

So [how do pet vaccinations work](#) and are there any risks? A vaccine is usually administered via an injection (or in some cases, a nasal spray or oral vaccine) and contains an agent similar to the virus or bacteria that causes the infectious disease. The vaccine stimulates your pet's immune system, allowing their body to recognise this foreign agent as a threat and to attack and 'remember' the agent. This prepares them to fight off disease if they encounter the infectious agent through the environment or contact with other animals.

Side effects may occasionally occur within a few hours following vaccination, but these are usually minor and should resolve

within one to two days. If you notice any side effects following vaccination, such as allergic reactions, sensitivity, fever, diarrhoea or vomiting or depression/inappetence, seek your veterinarian's advice. It's important to remember that the benefits of vaccination far outweigh any potential adverse reactions, [which are of low incidence](#).

[The World Small Animal Veterinary Association](#) has used extensive scientific evidence to develop guidelines for the vaccination of dogs and cats. They have classified vaccines as:

- 'core' vaccines, which every dog and cat must receive to prevent severe, life-threatening illnesses that occur throughout the world; and
- 'non-core' vaccines, which should be administered based on an individual animal's geographical location, local environment and lifestyle. The immunity from non-core vaccines usually lasts for 12 months or less, so they must be administered annually.

# Dog vaccinations



## Core vaccines

Your dog will need the following core vaccines, which are typically combined into one injection called the C3 vaccine (or the C5 vaccine, which also includes non-core vaccines such as Parainfluenza virus and Bordetella bronchiseptica to cover 'kennel cough') The C3 or core vaccines for the dog are those that confer protection against:

- Canine distemper virus, which causes a fatal disease of the nervous system that can lead to paralysis. Puppies are at particular risk, particularly in areas with low vaccination rates.
- Canine adenovirus, which causes hepatitis and affects not only the liver but also the eyes and kidneys.

- Canine parvovirus, which causes a highly infectious disease of the small intestine that leads to lethargy, loss of appetite, severe vomiting and diarrhoea (often with blood) and shock. [Parvovirus](#) progresses rapidly and can be fatal to puppies and even older dogs, despite intensive treatment. It occurs commonly in areas with low vaccination rates.

## Non-core vaccines

The following are common non-core vaccinations (C5 vaccination) that your dog may need in Australia:

- Parainfluenza virus; and
- Bordetella bronchiseptica, which both cause 'kennel cough', an upper respiratory disease commonly found in dogs who attend parks, dog day care and boarding kennels.

The vaccines for Parainfluenza virus and Bordetella bronchiseptica are often recommended and may be administered together via an intra-nasal spray or combined with the core vaccines into a C5 injection. The Bordetella vaccine can also be administered via oral vaccine in a single dose, which removes the need for a booster at 10 weeks.

- [Leptospira interrogans](#), which causes leptospirosis, a disease that leads to kidney and liver failure in dogs and potentially also in humans. Dogs are at risk through contact with stagnant water, rodents (who shed the bacteria in their urine), infected farm animals or other dogs, and warm areas with high rainfall. Your veterinarian will advise whether your dog should be vaccinated against leptospirosis.
- There are some other vaccinations which might be considered for your individual dog so it is important to talk to your veterinarian about what else might be needed.



# Dog vaccination checklist

Type	Timing	Date completed
C3 (Canine distemper, canine adenovirus, canine parvovirus)	6-8 weeks	__/__/__
	10-12 weeks	__/__/__
	(16 weeks)	__/__/__
	Booster at 6 or 12 months of age	__/__/__
	Every 3 years after (or more frequently if advised by your veterinarian)	__/__/__
Parainfluenza virus (kennel cough)	6 to 8 weeks	__/__/__
	10 to 12 weeks	__/__/__
	Annually	__/__/__
Bordetella bronchiseptica (kennel cough)	6 to 8 weeks	__/__/__
	(10 to 12 weeks)	__/__/__
	Annually	__/__/__
Leptospira interrogans	Annually (ask your vet)	__/__/__

# Cat vaccinations



Your cat will need the following core vaccines, which are typically combined into one injection called the F3 vaccine:

- Feline panleukopaenia, which causes a feline parvovirus
- Feline calicivirus; and
- Feline herpesvirus, which both cause a respiratory disease known commonly as 'cat flu'. This disease can be extremely debilitating and can recur throughout a cat's life in response to stress.

Non-core vaccines your cat may need if they are outdoor cats in high risk areas include:

- Chlamydia felis, a bacteria which causes conjunctivitis and upper respiratory tract disease and can be found in multi-cat environments.
- [Feline leukaemia virus \(FeLV\)](#), which causes potentially fatal infections and other illnesses, including cancer, through attacking the immune system. This virus is spread through close contact with infected cats.
- Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), which also leads to potentially fatal suppression of the immune system and is spread through cat fights. Undesexed male cats who live outdoors are at greatest risk.



# Cat vaccination checklist

Type	Timing	Date completed
F3 (Feline panleukopaenia, feline calicivirus, feline herpesvirus)	6-8 weeks	__/__/__
	10-12 weeks	__/__/__
	(16 to 20 weeks)	__/__/__
	Booster at 6 or 12 months of age	__/__/__
	Every 1 to 3 years after (as advised by your veterinarian)	__/__/__
Chlamydia felis	Annually (ask your vet)	__/__/__
Feline leukaemia virus	Annually (ask your vet)	__/__/__
Feline immunodeficiency virus	Annually (ask your vet)	__/__/__



## Vaccination schedules

Your pet's [vaccination schedule](#) should be based on the advice of your veterinarian, who will consider a range of factors to decide which vaccines they require, at what age and how often. This will depend on the duration of immunity of the available vaccines and your pet's individual risk factors. Use the following checklists as a reminder but remember there is no one-size-fits-all protocol, so they may need to be adapted.

For example, puppies and kittens may not require a 16 week booster depending on the vaccine manufacturer. [Expert panels](#) on feline vaccination recommend annual booster vaccinations for cats who are boarded in catteries. Also, some non-core vaccines such as leptospirosis for dogs and FIV for cats may be advised depending on the amount of time spent outdoors and on their overall health.

The key to setting up the right vaccination protocol for your dog or cat is to seek ongoing advice from your veterinarian, who will be aware of any changing needs or other health issues and will offer vaccinations in the context of an overall health assessment. For example, your pet will not be vaccinated if they are unwell at the time, as this could interfere with their ability to develop immunity. Your veterinarian can also advise about a range of other issues such as how to balance socialisation needs whilst reducing the risk of environmental exposure to infectious disease, the limitations on vaccinating a pet who is pregnant and where to start with a newly adopted adult pet whose previous vaccination history is unknown.



## Vaccination is important

Vaccination is a crucial part of preventative health care for your dog or cat. Your veterinarian can develop a vaccination protocol that meets the unique needs of your pet. Vaccinations may not be covered on standard pet insurance policies, however it may be possible to add optional cover for routine care such as vaccinations, so check your policy to see if you have coverage to help with the cost of preventative health care.

Just like [pet insurance](#) can help with the cost of expensive vet bills, vaccinating your pet could also save you thousands of dollars and reduce the emotional stress of having to treat your pet from a preventable disease. More importantly, it's one of the best things you can do to keep your pet healthy and increase their chances of living a long life.

For more information call 1300 855 150  
between 8am - 8pm Monday to Friday AEST.