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Vaccines, part 4: What Should We Vaccinate Against?

(If you missed the predecessor of this article, you can get it [here](#).)

The debate about vaccines and whether or not to vaccinate has taken a turn into the extremes: you either vaccinate - or you don't. Neither standpoint is based on a rational risk management concept, as it should...

The purpose of vaccination

Most people can quickly agree that it is noble to reduce suffering. Disease is suffering – and can even sometimes lead to death. Preventing that must be noble and commendable, we should think.

Reality is too complicated to allow us to claim that vaccination will always prevent disease and suffering. In fact, there is significant scientific evidence available to show that a significant amount of suffering is directly caused by vaccinations. On top of that, no scientific evidence exists to prove that vaccines actually work...

This leads us into an unpleasant dilemma. The only way we can provide meaningful answers is by using a risk management approach. We need to compare the risks associated with vaccination with the risks associated with not vaccinating.

It makes no sense to opt for a 50% likelihood of vaccine induced chronic health complications in order to avoid a 50% risk of a minor disease that only will cause some discomfort for a couple of weeks, even if that discomfort is serious.

This leaves only the diseases with high mortality rate as acceptable candidates for vaccination.

What are the canine diseases that have a high mortality rate?

Rabies tops this list with its almost 100% mortality rate. It can only be contracted through bites from an infected animal, though, and transfer is very far from given, even with serious bites.

Distemper is another classic. In the past, the death toll from this disease has often been around 30-50%, higher for puppies, lower for adults. The disease is transmitted through air, like the human flu (it is biologically related to measles).

Leptospirosis is another serious disease that often claims death if untreated. For the dog to contract Leptospirosis, it must have close contact with wild animals and their fresh urine where the bacteria causing this disease will live. The disease isn't truly life threatening, but the concern is that it can also attack humans, just like Rabies. Quite remarkably, in accordance with the Canine Health Concern stats (covering more than 5,000 dogs), 100% of all cases of Leptospirosis are diagnosed within 3 months after a vaccination...

Hepatitis is next - it often looks similar to Distemper in its symptoms, and it is indeed caused by a virus that is very similar to the Distemper virus. It is mainly contracted through ingestion of feces and urine from infected wildlife. It is not really a killer disease either, but it can cause a lot of chronic trouble if not treated.

Parvo comes next - but only for puppies less than 12 weeks old.... Puppies with insufficient immune strength passed on from their mother through the milk might succumb to this disease that attacks growing cells, often in a fatal way. For adults, however, this disease is nothing to write home about!

Lyme disease is borderline on this list. The disease is a nasty bacterial infection, transferred through certain ticks, and it can lead to death through severe neurologic damage.

End of list.

All the other diseases vets love to vaccinate against are plain simply not dangerous for your dog if you keep it in good shape by feeding it a healthy natural diet.

Is there a cure for these diseases?

Dogs that contract rabies are certain of a horrible death. There is no cure known or proven. Rabies kills some 40,000-60,000 people every year – and there are only 7 cases known of people surviving once the symptoms manifest themselves.

For Distemper, there is no known medication that will fight it effectively enough to be called a cure, but homeopathic treatments have shown many success stories, although not always with 100% recovery of all infected animals. Those success stories, however, are not accepted as "proof" of the established medicine authorities, because there are no systematic scientific studies available to prove how homeopathic remedies work.... (which is exactly the case also for vaccines, by the way!)

Leptospirosis can be effectively treated with antibiotics, and treatment is generally successful if applied early.

Treatment of Hepatitis is possible, but still leaves a risk of chronic damages to the liver if started too late.

Parvo can be treated quite successfully, probably with 90% success for young puppies, but only if treatment is started within hours of the attack.

Lyme disease is perfectly curable with antibiotics when treated immediately symptoms are evident.

What about exposure?

Diseases come and go. The big epidemics of medieval times no longer exist. The Bubonic Plague being just one example. This has not happened because of vaccination, but these diseases simply go extinct as their victims generate immunity against them. The same *will* happen with Parvo - if we want it to happen! But the price tag is that we accept the loss of a weak puppy here and there...

Polio was a terrible epidemic 50-70 years ago - but it was already on its return when the vaccine was introduced, and nowadays, in the past 25 years, there have been no cases of Polio whatsoever that have not been directly related to accidents with vaccines or generated by vaccines...

Measles is another great example. Europeans have been dealing with that disease for centuries - and generated excellent immunity against it. We considered it a "normal childhood disease" which basically everybody should expect to have - and could expect to survive! For native North Americans, however, it was a killer... they had not gone through the same evolution as the Europeans had - so they died like flies when the Europeans brought it along...

For Distemper, you need to be very, very careful about not listening to scaremonger.... Reality is that, in most parts of the western world, the disease is *extremely rare*, if not completely extinct. There are many states/provinces/countries in Europe and North America that simply have not seen the disease for decades. The vaccine is *not* free of risk: it can be the very cause of the disease! And the quite likely side effects are not negligible: chronic nerve damage, allergies, Irritated Bowel Syndrome, autoimmune disorders, and many more...

Rabies? Well, for more than 25 years, the number of cases in the USA has been down to less than 5 dogs per year. Not a single one of those cases were transferred to people. The average 2-3 human cases per year are all associated with bites from wildlife, with raccoons and skunks taking care of more than half - and dogs not even on the list! Vending machines that suddenly fall over people

who try to buy a snack or a pop kill more people every year in the USA than rabies does! (Source: [Olnhausen & Gann, Acta Chiropterologica, 6\(1\): 163-168, 2004](#)).

Whether or not eliminating the Rabies risk in North America is caused by vaccination (which I seriously dispute), the fact of the matter is that this disease is no serious threat anymore in Europe and North America.

And Parvo? Parvo is a man-made disease, created by irresponsible experimenting in a vaccine laboratory. It is everywhere now. Also in the wild. Wolves get it - and sometimes lose whole litters of puppies. But they adjust - and develop immunity - and will survive.

You need to take into account here that Parvo plain simply is no more dangerous to an adult dog than the common cold is to you. Vaccinating against it is thus madness. It is further crazy because you simply cannot vaccinate young puppies! (Well, you can go through the procedure, but it does not help anything - it only makes things worse and render the puppy more vulnerable to catch the disease than it was before this vaccination.)

What vaccines are then relevant to consider?

Diseases that have force to "wipe out everything", like Rabies and Distemper, are worth worrying about and seeking protection against when and where the threat is for real. However, for both of these diseases, you need to know what the status of it is in the area where you live! If you live in North America, Europe, or Australia, chances are that these diseases simply are non-existing in your neighborhood, and vaccination would thus be outright detrimental to your dog's health. (I know well that many local governments try to force you by law and regulation to poison your dog with unnecessary vaccine, but I am seriously encouraging civil disobedience to such stupid and ignorant laws and bylaws that try to strip you of your fundamental rights to decide what kind of protection and health care is right for you and your dog. It is none of any government's business, as there is no risk whatsoever for the general public resulting from your personal choices in this matter.)

Parvo is most definitely *not* a worthy candidate for vaccination, as its death toll on adult dogs is non-existent, and it hits puppies at a time where vaccination cannot work – vaccination is simply not a relevant tool for fighting that disease! We have to go other ways.

Leptospirosis, Hepatitis, and Lyme disease are all curable. The only situation where vaccination would be a diligent option for those would be to decrease possible suffering; this means that, *if* the vaccines and their side effects were convincingly negligible, *and* the exposure to the disease was very large, *then* vaccination *could* be a responsible option.

I hope you note that there is no "one-answer-fits-all" here.

You have to carefully assess your own dog's risk, primarily the exposure. If you live in an area where exposure is imminent, vaccination *once* could be a relevant option you should consider when the puppy is at least 12 weeks old, preferably 6 months. But if you do not have exposure, vaccination is serving no purpose other than destroying your dog's health by seriously increasing the risk of contracting a whole bunch of long-term problems.

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