

# Rabies: Why your Dog Needs this Vaccination

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## WHY VACCINATE FOR rabies?

The very mention of rabies triggers alarm, and it is accurate to state that the concerns are well founded.

### Vaccines PREVENT PROBLEMS

Vaccines play an essential role in ensuring your dog's health and vitality. Vaccines fortify the immune system against bacterial and viral invaders, making your dog better able to fight off infection and less likely to experience debilitating symptoms should he acquire the disease. When you introduce the killed or modified organisms in a vaccine into your dog, you stimulate an immune response, creating antibodies that

### A FEW FACTS ON RABIES

- Warm-blooded animals and humans can acquire the virus.
- There is no treatment for a dog that contracts the infection.
- Instances of unvaccinated dogs surviving rabies are extremely rare.
- If a dog that is up-to-date on rabies vaccinations is bitten or scratched by an animal in the wild, it is considered "exposed to rabies," is revaccinated, and placed under observation for a number of weeks.
- If a non-vaccinated dog is exposed to rabies, euthanizing is the norm, although, in some cases, the dog may be placed in strict isolation for a number of months.
- The only way to achieve a definite diagnosis is to examine brain tissue.

### HOW IS RABIES TRANSMITTED?

The rabies virus is shed in the saliva of an infected animal. Skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and bats are notorious carriers. The virus goes deep into the tissues of the victim through the biting activity of the rabid animal. It spreads through the nervous system and after 3 to 8 weeks affects

protect him – for a period of time – against those organisms. His immune system eventually "remembers" this response by creating memory cells, and then employs these cells if the disease-causing organism enters his body.

through the nervous system, and after 5 to 6 weeks attack the brain. The disease then progresses through three phases:

- **Prodromal phase:** The dog may be apprehensive, nervous, and anxious and may prefer to be alone. He may have a fever and lick the site of a bite. A gentle-natured dog may snap without reason, and a naturally aggressive dog may act quiet and affectionate.
- **Furious phase:** Signs of viciousness, disorientation, and seizures. Death can occur.
- **Paralytic phase:** This phase can follow either one of the first two stages. The animal may salivate and breathe with difficulty. Facial muscles become paralyzed; the jaw drops, and respiratory failure and death usually follow.

## PLAY IT SAFE

Rabies is highly preventable if you follow the recommended vaccine schedules and keep your pet away from wild animals. The laws pertaining to rabies vaccinations and biting dogs vary region to region. Your veterinarian is able to guide and assist you in this matter, giving your pet the protection he needs and you peace of mind.

## EFFICIENT, DIRECT DISEASE PREVENTION

Your dog's vaccines will not contain the actual disease-causing viruses or bacteria. They are first altered or killed before being introduced into the body. Today's vaccines for pets are either made for injection under the skin or into the muscle, or to be given into the nose or eye. Injectable vaccines, such as parvovirus vaccines, usually produce a more systemic (whole body) response. Those given in the eyes and nose produce a more localized immune response, and are generally more advantageous against inhaled viruses such as parainfluenza.

## MEMORY CELLS – THE ULTIMATE VACCINATION GOAL

Memory cells resulting from vaccinations help your dog's body respond to diseases much faster and more broadly. Multiple vaccinations are often required to ensure a consistently strong response. For example, parvovirus

requires multiple boosters as a puppy and then subsequent (less frequent) adult vaccinations to maintain memory cell populations – and your dog’s immunity.