

Parkway Veterinary Hospital's Current Standards of Care

Over the past few years, the field of veterinary medicine has seen many changes to recommendations in pet healthcare. The veterinarians at Parkway are always continuing their education by attending meetings, reading veterinary journals, and discussing products and protocols with representatives from leading companies such as Merial, Pfizer, Merck, Idexx, Heska, etc. Our goal is to provide the most current standards of care to our patients. Therefore, we would like to inform our clients of our new and improved protocols. These changes have been researched and supported by the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) and AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association), and we have elected to institute the following changes to provide the best healthcare for our patients and clients.

DOGS

1. Puppy vaccine protocols have not changed. It is advisable to vaccinate for DHPP (Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza) at 6 to 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, then one year from the final puppy booster. Thereafter, we are now vaccinating for DHPP **every three years**.
2. The Lyme vaccination series for puppies begins at 12 weeks of age, is boosted at 16 weeks, then annually thereafter. If vaccinating an adult dog against Lyme, there is a series of two vaccines initially, three weeks apart, then annually thereafter.
3. Rabies vaccinations are currently provided at 12 to 16 weeks of age, initially, then boosted 9 to 12 months later in order to become a three-year vaccine. This is a standard set by Massachusetts state law. Once on a three-year Rabies vaccination schedule, the patient can always receive a three-year vaccination.
4. Kennel cough (bordetella) vaccination requirements may vary per kennel situation. Intranasal vaccines are required (if possible) and provide not only the best protection from infection but also prevent environmental shedding of the disease. The vaccine can be given annually, unless required every 6 months by the boarding facility in which your dog will be kenneled. A booster every six months is considered safe.
5. As routine heartworm testing is essential, we will test your dog for heartworm annually. Though no medication or prevention is guaranteed to be 100 percent effective, it is recommended to administer heartworm medication year-round as heartworm and intestinal parasites are prevalent year-round.

CATS

1. Kitten vaccine protocols have not changed. It is recommended to vaccinate for FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia) at 6 to 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, then one year from the final kitten booster. For "low risk" patients, i.e. indoor only or completely restricted to a yard or porch without exposure to other cats, the FVRCP vaccination is given every three years. For outdoor or "high risk" cats, it is still recommended to provide an annual booster against these viruses.
2. There are currently two types of Rabies vaccinations available to our feline patients. The Massachusetts law is very strict and all cats, indoor and outdoor, are required to be vaccinated for Rabies. If using a "killed virus" vaccine, the protocol is to first vaccinate no earlier than 3 months old. The second booster must then be given 9 to 12 months later (not a day early or late) in order to be considered a three-year vaccine. The cat may then be vaccinated for Rabies every three years thereafter (excluding extra boosters if the animal sustains a wound).

If using the Purevax vaccine, a non-adjuvanted vaccine considered to reduce the risk of vaccine induced cancer or reaction, the vaccine can be given as early as 8 weeks old but **must be given yearly**. This vaccine is only labeled for annual use and the patient must receive it before a year has lapsed in order to be considered vaccinated. If even a day overdue, the vaccination will be considered expired and the cat un-vaccinated.

Both types of vaccines are available to our feline patients at Parkway Veterinary Hospital. Please speak to our veterinarians to determine the best vaccination option for your cat!

3. For outdoor or other types of high-risk cats, it is recommended to vaccinate for feline leukemia. We are changing to Purevax, a non-adjuvanted vaccine manufactured by Merial to reduce the risk of vaccine induced reaction or cancer. The initial series requires two boosters (starting at 9 weeks for kittens), three weeks apart, and annually thereafter.

These vaccine guidelines were designed to provide the best protection yet maintain your pet's health as best we can. They certainly may be customized for the individual patient, and the doctors at Parkway are open to discussing this with each client.

One other change being instituted at Parkway Veterinary Hospital is a routine NSAID screen. This blood test will be required every three to four months for all patients that are on chronic non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (dog and cat) before receiving further medication refills. Though these medications are beneficial and will help reduce pain and inflammation, it is important to make sure they are not causing any damage to internal organs.

We continue to recommend topical flea and tick prevention for dogs and cats. We realize that many clients wish to purchase their pets' medications online. Please note that when you purchase medications such as Heartgard and Frontline through your veterinarian, the manufacturer guarantees the product's efficacy. Moreover, our prices are comparable to retailers such as Pet Meds. In some cases, we may be able to save you money. In addition to a product guarantee, we will give you a seventh vial of Frontline Plus for free (a \$14 to \$18 value), with the purchase of a six-pack. With the purchase of a 12 pack of Heartgard Plus, we will give you a \$5 mail in rebate. Please feel free to inquire about our prices before ordering your pets' medications online.

With these minor changes in our vaccination and testing protocol, we aim to offer the best veterinary care possible. Don't hesitate to call our office if you have any questions, as we are happy to answer them!