



Frequently Asked Questions about vaccinations and other procedures performed at the THS Vaccination Clinic.

What animals are eligible to attend the vaccination clinic?

- Healthy adult cats and dogs.
- Puppies and kittens that are at least 6 weeks of age.
- Retrovirus positive animals (FIV+, FeLV+) are recommended to seek vaccination service with their own veterinarian who can provide killed vaccines. The Toronto Humane Society's Vaccination Service uses modified live vaccines that can initiate a low level of infection or illicit no immune response from felines affected with these viruses. Please talk to your veterinarian if this applies to your pet in order to make an informed decision about their vaccinations.

What animals are NOT eligible for the vaccination clinic?

- Unhealthy or contagious cats and dogs. This includes cats and dogs that are coughing, sneezing, displaying watery eyes, runny noses, mange or ringworm. The attending veterinarian may choose not to vaccinate if the physical exam reveals medical concerns.
- Pregnant or nursing animals
- Animals with a history of vaccine reactions. Please see your local veterinarian in regards to scheduling a vaccination appointment as special precautions may be required.

How does vaccination work?

- Vaccines trick the body into believing it already has a full-blown disease, without actually making your animal sick. This is known as the immune response.
 - A weakened or dead version of the illness we want protection against is injected into the body.
 - The immune system recognizes the weak or dead disease and produces specific antibodies that will identify the illness and allow white blood cells to attack the disease if it is encountered again in the future.

Is my pet protected immediately after vaccination?

- Vaccines are generally effective 5 to 10 days after the injection.
- Kittens and puppies require several booster vaccinations before they are considered to be protected against commonly encountered diseases. This is because a mother animal's maternal antibodies can counteract the vaccine, and it is impossible to tell when those maternal antibodies are no longer active in a young animal. Puppies and kittens are generally vaccinated once a month from about the age of 6 weeks up until the age of four months for a total of three vaccination appointments.

What are the benefits of vaccinating my pets?

- Our pets are born with maternal antibodies that protect them from illness when they are young, but these antibodies wear off as they age and leave your pet without any protection against commonly encountered diseases, some of which may be fatal.
- Vaccinating your pets greatly reduces the chances of them falling ill from any number of commonly encountered viruses and even some bacterial infections.
- Rabies is a viral disease that is fatal in mammals, including humans. Ontario law requires that companion cats and dogs be vaccinated for rabies.

When should I get my pet vaccinated?

- At the Toronto Humane Society Vaccination Clinic we begin the core vaccine series at 6 weeks of age. Your puppy or kitten should be vaccinated once a month until they reach 4 months old, this will mean most puppies and kittens receive 3 core vaccines before they are a year old. Puppies and kittens can be vaccinated for rabies once they reach 4 months of age. You can combine the last round of core vaccines with your young pet's first rabies vaccine.
- Adult animals that have never been vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination history should get two injections one month apart to ensure immunization.
- Adult animals who have had vaccines in the past should be revaccinated yearly. Senior animals may not need vaccines every year – please discuss the decision to vaccinate or not vaccinate these animals with your veterinarian.
- We recommend that all animals are fully vaccinated prior to coming in for their surgical procedure. Should you wish to complete the booster vaccinations at the time of surgery please note that these vaccines will be completed during the anesthetic (usually at the end of the surgery). All vaccines carry a very low risk for severe (anaphylactic) reactions. There is a chance that a reaction might not be noticed immediately under these circumstances. You will be required to sign the authorization form acknowledging you understand these risks and that THS is not responsible for any illnesses potentially transmitted to your pet at this clinic.

Why should I deworm my pet?

- Our pets can be infected with several types of internal parasites. These parasites can cause upset stomachs, diarrhea, vomiting, and bloody stool. These parasites can also leech away the nutrients from an animal's diet, causing them to lose weight and become malnourished.
- Some internal parasites commonly infecting companion animals can also cause infection in people. The elderly, the very young, and anyone with a compromised immune system are most at risk.
- Deworming your pet not only maintains their optimal health, but can prevent your family from getting sick as well.

What is a microchip, and why would I want one?

- A microchip is a small device that is inserted under your pet's skin. It is just about the size of a grain of rice and does not require sedation or an anesthetic to implant.
- The information you provided to the Toronto Humane Society (name, address, phone number etc.) will be digitally transcribed to the microchip.
- All veterinary clinics, shelters and animal control agencies have a microchip reader which they use to scan found animals for microchips. If your animal has one the finder will be able to retrieve your information and contact you to return your pet.

What is heartworm?

- Heartworm is a serious and potentially fatal condition caused by parasitic worms that live in the heart and the blood vessels that supply blood to the lungs. Pets can contract heartworm from mosquitoes that are infected with the larva of these worms.
- The infection can result in damage to the heart, lungs and liver. The pet may die as a result of severe damage to the internal organs.
- Heartworm poses a serious threat to pets in Canada and the United States, and especially to dogs.
- A survey conducted in 2010 found that the number of dogs with heartworm in Ontario increased by 60% between 2002 and 2010.

Why should I get my pet tested for heartworm?

- Without regular testing, heartworm is usually only detected after the disease has progressed, in which case irreversible damage may have already been done to the internal organs.
- There is a preventative medication available to protect your pet against heartworm infection, however this preventative can be dangerous to use if an infection is already present. We recommend that all dogs are tested for the disease yearly prior to the start of preventative treatment.