

Dear Pet Owner,

I am writing to you today to inform you of recently reported information concerning vaccination intervals and vaccination risks in our pets. They are much healthier and safer today due to vaccinations that prevent potentially fatal diseases such as Rabies, Distemper, Parvo, Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper), Feline Leukemia, and many others. It would be ill-advised to allow the possibility of a vaccine reaction, which occurs in only a very small percentage of pets, to convince you not to vaccinate against preventable fatal diseases.

Research at major universities shows that the newer, purer, more potent vaccines used by veterinarians have been improved to the point that they may now provide protection to vaccinated animals for more than one year, perhaps even for several years in some cases. We also know that there are risks associated with the use of any vaccine or medication, and although rare, there are sometimes reactions to vaccination that may be life threatening and/or produce life threatening conditions. No one knows for certain, yet, if vaccinating less frequently will reduce the incidence of vaccination reactions or vaccine related conditions. The vaccines we use are labeled to be boosted with an annual revaccination after completing the initial vaccination series, and the manufacturers have proven that the vaccines will produce an acceptable level of immunity in most vaccinated animals for at least one year. We can be most certain that pets are protected from these diseases if we adhere to the manufacturer's recommendations. However, and depending on the individual circumstances of each animal, extending the vaccination interval with the vaccines we currently use may be safe and prudent.

All vaccines are not alike, so we believe that you should know that there are some lower quality vaccines available to the public as over-the-counter products, often at reduced cost, that may provide less purity and a lower level and duration of protection per dose while potentially increasing the risk of vaccination reactions. We do not recommend the use of those products.

Currently, the state of Texas requires owners of dogs and cats to have them vaccinated against rabies at three months of age, with annual revaccinations thereafter. We will continue this recommendation for all our patients until the state rabies law is revised by the Texas legislature and other state regulations are adopted. We will also continue offering other vaccinations as boosters as frequently as deemed necessary by Drs. Emerson and Frey, annually for some vaccines and triennially for others, unless you choose otherwise, or unless those vaccines are medically contraindicated for your pet. Some of our friends and clients have stated they feel safer if their pets are vaccinated annually as has been done for years. In those cases, we will adhere to their wishes.

There is good evidence obtained through thorough research indicating that not all animals need annual vaccinations, but these same studies do not tell us which ones do. It is highly likely that some pets, because of age, either young or old, or compromised immune systems or ill health, will always need vaccinations more frequently, rather than at intervals of 2 to 3 years. With the technology available today, we are unable to

determine which ones those are.

Young pets, both dogs and cats, starting their initial vaccination series, require annual distemper vaccinations through their 4th year of age. Research is ongoing at this time attempting to define the true length of actual protective vaccine antibody levels for all vaccines. Some diseases, such as Lyme disease in dogs and feline leukemia in cats, still require annual vaccinations. It has also been learned that one or two, such as the Bordetella or canine kennel cough vaccine, should be administered every 6 months for good immunity. Indoor/outdoor or totally outdoor cats should be tested for feline leukemia and feline AIDS annually.

Designing an individual schedule for your pet will take extra time and effort on both our parts because consideration must be given to benefits, risks, exposures, and your preferences. We will need to collect additional personal information about your pet in order for us to accurately assess the risks and exposures each of our patients may face.

Our goal, as always, is to provide the best in veterinary medical care for your pet to ensure the longest and healthiest life possible. At the same time, we strive daily to maintain your good will and trust because we value you as a friend and client of Emerson Animal Hospital.

If you have questions concerning vaccinations or the infrequent reactions related to them, please do not hesitate in calling us.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Harold Ray Emerson, D.V.M.