

Consider Vaccine Titters

Avoid over vaccination and decrease the risk of injection site –associated tumors

Current research done at Cornell Veterinary College has shown that feline respiratory (distemper) vaccinations may, for some cats, provide protection against infectious diseases for up to six years. The duration of protection ranged from 100% for cats at 12 months after vaccination to 50% for cats six years later. In light of the discovery of injection site (vaccine-associated) tumors in a small percentage of cats (approximately 1 in 10,000), vaccinating more often than is necessary becomes more of a concern. We, as concerned cat owners, must also keep in mind that the “distemper” vaccine has for many years provide extremely valuable protection against an equally deadly disease.

Vaccine-associated tumors (fibrosarcomas) tend to be very locally aggressive, and, if left untreated, they may spread to distant organs, such as the lungs and liver. Therefore, if your cat has a lump following vaccination that does not resolve within 30 days (Some swelling for 3-4 weeks may be normal.), please have your cat examined for the possibility of a vaccine-associated tumor. Most of the time, the swellings are only pre-cancerous, and they pose no further problems if they are removed in a timely manner.

To determine with certainty whether an annual vaccination booster is needed, your cat’s circulating antibodies to the infectious diseases may be measured by submitting a blood sample to a special laboratory. If immunity is sufficient, then boosters are not done at this time, but rechecked the following year. If immunity is not sufficient, then a booster is given, and a recheck antibody titer may be done a month later.

Given this set of risks why are titers not done on all cats? The answer lies in cost and convenience. The cost of a titer is seven times that of the cost of a vaccine booster, and the response time for the titers is approximately 2 weeks. Yet, if your cat has had a reaction in the past, or if you do not

wish to take any risk with your beloved cat and if you have the means and patience to have the titers done, we are happy to offer this service! Please note that we can not offer titers for the leukemia vaccine, as they are not available through any laboratory. Similarly, the State of Maine does not accept rabies titers in lieu of a recent vaccine. On a very positive note many companies are presently working on a titer test which is more affordable and can provide results quickly at our office. We will let you know as soon as this option is available!