

# HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE FOR CAVALIERS

## PART ONE

### *The Vaccine Issue*

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I have considered the items that have improved the health of our six generations of Cavaliers over the past twenty years and have broken it down to the following areas:

1. Limiting Vaccinations
2. Improving Nutrition
3. Stopping Suppressive Medical Treatments
4. Homeopathic or other holistic modalities.
5. Appropriate Supplements and Nutraceuticals

We will take each of these areas separately and this issue will address the vaccine question. While personally, I feel vaccinations are toxic to the life force and do not support them from a homeopathic perspective, I do feel that this is a decision each person must make themselves. On a larger scale, I realize vaccinations have a valid place in the health maintenance of our animal (and human) populations but it is clear they are being abused and much of the illness and disease we see in our animals and ourselves can be explained by this repeated attack on the immune system. Once we have established immunity, it is usually very long lasting, even life time, so repeated vaccines are not required. To help strike a balance between achieving immunity and not overdoing it, I recommend the use of vaccine titers to monitor immunity in our Cavaliers.

#### **My Issue and Experience with Vaccines**

My experience has shown that the number one concern and the number one impediment to lasting health is the over use of vaccinations. Vaccinations have their proper place in preventative medicine but they have, for decades, been used as a profit center in veterinary practice. "Come in for your annual vaccinations", has been the mantra for so many years that it has become automatic for most concerned owners. There have been many studies that have shown that annual vaccination is not required for a solid immune response to most, if not all, of the diseases vaccinated for annually.

In the United States, we vaccinate for canine distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, coronavirus, leptospiro-

sis, bordatella, parainfluenza and the new one is canine influenza. Years ago, when parvo was fairly new, one of the big selling points from the vaccine companies to the veterinarians was "High Titer Vaccines". These were vaccines that registered a strong immune response when the antibody level in the blood was measured by a process of measuring antibody titers.

When an animal is exposed to an agent that creates an immune response (natural or vaccination), it creates cells that manufacture specific antibodies to that agent (antigen). Luckily, there are cells that store this pattern, often for the life of the animal so that any further exposure evokes a memory (anamnestic) response. That is a rapid increase in production of the antibody protein needed to help fight the invading antigen. This immunity appears to be lifelong (or very close) with parvo and distemper in dogs, as an example. Repeating a vaccine when immunity already exists, over stimulates the immune system and, I feel, leads to an overactive immune system and the immune mediated diseases we see more and more. Thyroiditis, pancreatitis, diabetes, asthmas, joint issues and other immune mediated diseases are on the rise. This does not even touch the vaccine related tumors and multiple other issues that arise from a homeopathic perspective.

#### **Understanding the Titer Process**

My point is, if there is already a protective immunity, why keep attacking and cranking up the immune system? That is where titers and common sense come into play. When a serum sample from a test animal is combined with a test solution and there is sufficient antibody in the serum – a chemical reaction occurs that indicates presence of the antibody. If this happens when you add one unit of serum to the test solution and get a reaction the titer is 1:1.

Since you know there is antibody and want to measure it, you start to dilute the serum and then test each dilution. If you dilute it 1:10 and it reacts still then you know there is at least ten times more antibody than if it

only reacted at 1:1. The lab will continue to dilute and test until there no longer is a reaction and we reach an endpoint. Once we get to that point we know how much antibody the animal has. Take 5 dogs:

- Dog A has a distemper titer of 1:5
- Dog B has a distemper titer of 1:64
- Dog C has a distemper titer of 1:200
- Dog D has a distemper titer of 1:1000

Dog D has 200 times more antibody in his blood than Dog A!

## Understanding Challenge Studies

Challenge studies are studies where animals have their titers measured and are then exposed to the disease in a potent form along with animals that have no immunity. Depending on whether they get sick and how many react, the researcher can calculate a protective minimum titer to recommend. It has been found in the US that a titer of 1:5 or more for both parvo and distemper is protective. So every dog in our example above has a protective titer to distemper and it may well be that Dog A had 1 or 2 vaccines (or natural exposure) in its life and Dog D has had a dozen and suffers from loads of vaccine derived illnesses.

The question then becomes, if there is a safe, protective antibody level then why keep pounding on the immune system if the animal is already protected? That is why we routinely measure titers and, if protective, do not revaccinate a protected animal.

## Less Needed Vaccines

There is also a new trend of giving vaccines to animals for diseases to which animal will usually not be exposed. The most recent of these is canine influenza. Most non-showing dogs will not be exposed and this push to give it or even require it of every dog is another example of the (pun intended) "Cavalier" attitude of the veterinary community – they think that something as powerful as a vaccine cannot have a negative effect.

## Understanding the "Castle" Analogy

I often use an analogy to help clients understand the problem with overuse of vaccinations. Centuries ago castles were built with outer defenses, inner defenses and then the most inner castle "keep" the rooms for the last defense - the most inner sanctum. When the castle came under siege, the attack started on the outside and slowly progressed inward. Many attackers never made it inside and if they did it was after a long battle and there were far fewer of them and the defenders were prepared.

Think of our immune system in this same way. When we get exposed to something like the flu, we inhale it in and the flu virus has to go through many levels of our defenses before it makes it to the blood (the inner sanctum in this case or "castle keep"). If it (the virus) overwhelms our outer defenses, the virus is usually weakened (attenuated). Then, if it makes it to the blood (our castle keep or inner sanctum), it will usually be after days of it being battled and weakened by our outer defenses in a normal route of infection. This is natural exposure and what our

immune systems expect.

Now suppose, as we have all seen in the movies, the attacker finds a traitor or a secret tunnel into the castle and bursts upon the occupants as they are sitting down to dinner or are asleep. Pandemonium reigns, there is no orderly organized build up or response. Everyone runs around like crazy. This is the effect a vaccination can have on our immune system.

A flu vaccination is designed to produce a viremia (virus in the blood) in twenty minutes or so. Much like the occupants attacked by stealth, the immune system does not have time for an organized, orderly response – it overreacts.

Over time, with repeated vaccinations, the immune system gets so sensitive that it starts to react massively against everything. This is my theory as to why we have so much autoimmune disease, allergies in our animals and problems with ourselves these days. We have a hyper-reactive, overstimulated immune system due to too many "sneak" attacks.

Since titers have been proven to be an effective measure of protection, it makes sense to use them to determine if a re-vaccination is actually required instead of giving an unneeded vaccination.

## Titers and the Rabies Issue

Of all the titering, the biggest issue is the rabies vaccine. While protective titers (1:5) have been established by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) for people, there are no established titers for dogs. This makes it difficult to push regulating agencies to take titers in lieu of vaccination for rabies. I have seen older animals with multiple rabies vaccines with titers over 1:8000 and you know this animal has to be protected yet the law is the law. The only way around it appears to be if the animal is ill already and the veterinarian may be permitted to write a letter of exemption but that varies from state to state and county to county.

## Rabies Challenge Study

Dr. Jean Dodds and her group at Hemopet have been working on a rabies challenge study to help prove that a rabies vaccine is good for, at least, five years. Up until now the longest study has been three years hence, the three year rabies. Any financial support her group gets will help to make it easier to legally avoid over vaccination for rabies (<http://www.rabieschallengefund.org>). As for the other vaccines, many of them are not required by law and only by habit so if you can prove, through titers, that they are protected, then your veterinarian should have no need to give them a vaccine that they do not require and could hurt them.

Next time we will take on another of the subjects listed above and I will tell you what I have learned in thirty-four years of veterinary practice (twenty of which has been holistic.)

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