

Alternatives 4 Animal Health

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Vaccinations

Part III: Your Very Own Waiver

Did you know that, even if you get a postcard saying your animal's rabies vaccination is now due, that many times, you have an automatic waiver in place that even your veterinarian may overlook? It's true. It's called **the label** on every drug and vaccine, including rabies vaccines.

If you read the label on a vaccine from any manufacturer, it will inevitably say, "Only for use in healthy dogs, cats, ferrets, etc" See that "healthy" word? It can be your automatic waiver. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves all drug labels, which include indications (what diseases it's to be used for), species, dosage, method of administration, etc. As a practicing veterinarian, one is bound to follow the label on any drug or vaccine, unless s/he feels it's in the patient's best interest to prescribe "offlabel." The FDA has refused to regulate the practice of medicine, so you may not have any legal recourse to fall back on, but that shouldn't stop you from questioning your veterinarian if you are called on to vaccinate an animal who is clearly out of the realm of "healthy."



I have almost stopped cringing when clients tell me of bringing their pet into their conventional veterinarian for a complaint (fever, poor appetite, skin disease, etc.) and the vet, noticing that the due date has arrived for vaccinations, gives the vaccine to the suffering animal! Did that veterinarian really, in his/her best judgement, feel that this ill animal would benefit from a vaccination at this time? I make note of it in the records, because, more often than not, the animal's illness gets worse from this point onwards. As a homeopathic veterinarian, I know I have to factor this in if I am to cure this patient.

So, what makes your animal an "off-label" or possibly exempt case for an annual or semi-annual vaccination? Here are some common examples:

- Hypothyroid dogs on a daily thyroid replacement drug.
- Allergic animals who scratch or chew themselves frequently.
- The same itchy animals above who are on meds like antihistamines, prednisone, or the latest in the wave of immune suppressants, cyclosporine (Atopica).
- The same previously itchy animals who are being controlled with special diets that have unusual ingredients (duck, pea, venison, trout, "novel proteins," etc).
- Any animal on a special diet for kidney disease, bladder crystals, liver disease, intestinal problems (like Inflammatory Bowel Disease), dental disease, or any other reason.
- The dog or cat who routinely needs ear medications to prevent infections or itchy, swollen, discharging ears.

- Any animal who is on a seizure medicine to control epilepsy (I still cringe when I hear these poor guys getting vaccinated. I can't help it. This is so wrong).
- The dog with "dry eye" who is on drops (often of cyclosporine) to keep the eye moist because his tear ducts have autoimmune inflammation that prevent them from making tears.
- A hyperthyroid cat, on medicine or after radioactive iodine treatment, to treat another immune disorder, this one causing his thyroid to over produce thyroid hormone.
- Any animal on heart medications.
- Any animal on pain medications.
- Any diabetic animal, whether or not insulin is being used.
- Any animal on antibiotics.

Hmmm, do you see the pattern I see here?
ON MEDICATIONS = NOT HEALTHY.

- Any animal who you are bringing in to the vet because s/he has the "ADR Syndrome." That's "Ain't Doin' Right."

Think about this last one for a minute. It should be obvious, but it's often missed. If you have called your veterinarian to schedule an exam to find out what's wrong with your dog or cat or horse, this animal is, with or without a diagnosis being reached, not "healthy," right? That's precisely why you are at the veterinarian's office. So, even before you go in, you should be mentally prepared to say "NO" to vaccinations, knowing what you now know about the label on every vaccine. Whether Miss Kitty is "due" or not, or whether the law has some opinion on the matter of rabies vaccinations, you have the right, as that animal's caregiver, to refuse to allow vaccination on the spot. "I'm sorry, but this animal is not well, and therefore, should not receive a vaccine today," is a very reasonable response. A simpler one is just: "I'd like to wait on that for now."

And here's the unfortunate but true nugget in this discussion: it ultimately must be you who makes this decision not to vaccinate. I have heard way too many stories of ill animals being vaccinated to think you can entrust that decision to your veterinarian.

Of course, this points to the even broader area of: who is responsible for your animal's health? Those who hand that responsibility over to the White Coats are probably not even reading this site, but maybe it's time to consider that you are really the one who needs to steer the course for this animal in your care. I'm mostly speaking of prevention here. The choices you make for prevention may be better ones than those promulgated by conventional veterinarians. That's why this site is here.

So, take a stand if your animal is not well, and you are faced with people wanting to vaccinate "off label". You will do this animal a huge favor, and you have no less than the FDA on your side.