

Links to recent articles in this topic

It appears that the letter written by those UK veterinarians and published in the Veterinary Times in January subsequently was picked up by the Dog World then the Dog Training Weekly in the UK. Then, last Thursday, it seemed like most of the mainstream media picked up on it.

The below three links will take you to 3 of those.

It was also in the Daily Express, the Daily Mail, The Times and I don't know what else.

Also below is the article in the Times, and if you go to this BBC site there is a video interview:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/listenagain/zthursday_20040401.shtml

Under April 1st, click on the 0640 timeslot "a group of vets....."

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1184067,00.html

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3588457.stm> [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2004%2F04%2F02%2Fnpet02.xml)

[xml=%2Fnews%2F2004%2F04%2F02%2Fnpet02.xml](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2004%2F04%2F02%2Fnpet02.xml)

Times article The Times Newspaper April 02, 2004 Annual pet jab is waste of money, vets claim By Sam Lister

DOG and cat owners are spending millions of pounds on unnecessary and potentially dangerous vaccines for their pets, according to a group of veterinary surgeons.

More than 30 vets have signed an open letter accusing the pharmaceutical industry of encouraging annual vaccinations, although doses last much longer. The advice being given to vets by drug companies, and passed on to pet owners, amounts to "fraud by misrepresentation, fraud by silence and theft by deception", the group says.

Annual vaccination boosters, which cost up to #50, are given to dogs and cats to protect them against potentially life-threatening conditions such as distemper, leptospirosis and several strains of flu.

In the letter to the Veterinary Times, the vets point to American research that links the overuse of boosters to "adverse post-vaccination events", including auto-immune disorders and transient infections. "It is our contention that those (vets) who continue to give annual vaccinations in the light of new evidence may well be acting contrary to the welfare of the animals committed to their care," the letter concludes.

The pharmaceutical industry defended the advice given on its products yesterday. Members said that they were bound by rules from licensing authorities. Because of a lack of general research into the long-term efficacy of the drugs, a minimum 12-month period of immunity had to be recommended. John Saxton, one of the letter's signatories, described the level of vaccinations given to Britain's 13 million dogs and cats as "complete overkill". Mr Saxton, from Leeds, added: "All the research is saying the same thing, that annual boosters are not necessary. But vets cannot give impartial advice because they are not being passed on impartial advice from the drug companies. "The information they are working on may have been valid 20 years ago, but things have moved on." A primary course of two vaccinations is normally given to puppies and kittens between the age of eight and 14 weeks, followed by annual boosters. Pet owners can expect to pay more than #700 for vaccinations over the lifetime of the average pet. The boosters, which cost from #20 to #50, are central to the annual income of most veterinary clinics, with a large practice likely to see in excess of 5,000 cases a year.

Bruce Fogle, a vet and broadcaster based in West London, said that after studying research from Europe and America he had decided to stop giving annual vaccinations for some conditions. "As the number of diseases against which dogs and cats were being vaccinated increased during the 1970s and 1980s, so the culture changed to an annual booster inoculation for everything," he said. "I have now switched back to vaccinating every three years against the diseases where I was confident that the efficacy was sufficient to give three years' protection. But the problem for most vets has been that the manufacturers have recommended yearly doses." The manufacturers say that although they can test animals for one or two years so that they can give a minimum cover or immunity, it is difficult to perform lifelong tests.

David Sutton, a spokesman for Intervet, one of the world's largest veterinary drug manufacturers, said that proving longer > term immunity would require testing a large number of animals for many years. "We base our recommendations on the science and the science we have tells us that we don't know how long immunity lasts > in any individual animal," he said. "What we do know is there are some animals that need more frequent vaccination than others and our vaccine recommendations have to be based on taking account of those animals."

Freda Scott-Park, president of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, said that all vets should continue to observe current drug recommendations until more conclusive scientific evidence suggested otherwise. "We are trying to protect as many pets as possible from these diseases, which can be deadly," she said. "There is no guarantee that one animal will respond as well to a vaccine as another animal."

Dr Scott-Park dismissed suggestions that repeated vaccines could have an adverse affect. "Vaccination is vital. No other single thing has provided a greater benefit to companion animals," she said.

WHY VACCINATE?

The primary course of vaccinations normally comprises two injections - the first at about eight weeks and the second at 12 to 14 weeks - costing #80 in total. A third jab is sometimes recommended and annual booster jabs cost about #50, making #730 in total for a dog or cat that lives to 14.

The jabs, which are given in the scruff of the neck, protect against conditions including:

DOGS: parvovirus (a gastrointestinal infection); canine distemper (pneumonia and inflammation of the brain); and leptospirosis (a liver or kidney infection).

CATS: feline enteritis; feline respiratory diseases (cat flu); and feline leukaemia, which suppresses the immune system.

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