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# Vaccine Protocol

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Branch Managers and Branch Staff

**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

**THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

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Authored by: Animal Health/Operations

# Vaccine Protocol

*OUR MISSION: To protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in British Columbia.*

## Policy

**All in-coming shelter dogs and cats six (6) weeks of age and older entering BC SPCA shelters are to be appropriately vaccinated the day of intake unless:**

- an attending veterinarian decides their health status precludes being vaccinated
- their vaccine status is current and certified by veterinary documentation
- to attempt to vaccinate the animal would put staff in a position of undue risk

Booster vaccines are to be administered according to the written directions that follow in this protocol.

Our vaccine policy allows for exceptions ONLY if an attending veterinarian specifies, if vaccines are documented as current, or if the animal is too aggressive to handle safely. We have had a number of “veterinarian exceptions” that have led to devastating disease outbreaks.

**Veterinarian exceptions may only be made in the following circumstances (these must be made by a veterinarian and cannot be made at branch level):**

- animal is in critical distress or otherwise severely systemically ill (high fever, etc.), as documented by a veterinarian
- animal has a known historical adverse reaction to the specific vaccine in question, as documented by a veterinarian

**Animals who are simply small, thin, geriatric, pregnant, nursing, have skin issues, URI, trauma, or are on antibiotics or other medications, etc. MUST still be vaccinated.** This policy can be shared with attending veterinarians. Veterinarians with concerns are welcome to contact Dr. Hannah Weitzenfeld at [hweitzenfeld@spca.bc.ca](mailto:hweitzenfeld@spca.bc.ca) or 604-505-1570 directly to discuss.

Animal Health is engaged in ongoing work with veterinarians to share our policies and information about the greatly increased risk of infectious disease in shelter medicine vs. private practice. For questions about this, please contact Dr. Hannah Weitzenfeld.

## Purpose of this Protocol

Facilities sheltering dogs and cats in British Columbia commonly encounter serious contagious disease situations:

For dogs:

- Canine Distemper Virus
- Canine Parvovirus
- Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC or Kennel Cough Complex)

For cats:

- Feline Distemper Virus (Panleukopenia) aka Feline Parvovirus
- Upper Respiratory Disease Complex (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis [Herpesvirus-1], Calicivirus)

It is well documented and universally accepted that vaccinations can prevent disease and control its spread through a population. Most vaccines are considered highly efficacious when administered under ideal conditions.

Animals entering our sheltering system are frequently suffering from physical and/or psychological stress and therefore may not respond as ideally to a vaccine as a cat or dog in a home. That said, shelter medicine research has conclusively demonstrated that vaccination upon admission is crucial in preventing and controlling contagious disease in the shelter.

Studies have shown that after injection of a modified live virus vaccine there is a measurable immune response after two (2) hours. Therefore the best procedure, when possible, is to **vaccinate animals immediately upon admission.**

### Basic Principles

The sole purpose of vaccinating shelter dogs and cats is to protect these animals by reducing the potential for the occurrence and spread of disease during their sheltering experience. Shelter vaccines form only part of the veterinarian recommended vaccine profile and by no means is the animal to be considered as “fully vaccinated.”

Our vaccine manufacturer is Zoetis. The feline vaccine (FVRCP) is called **Felocell 3** and the canine vaccine (DHPP or DA2PP) is called **Vanguard 5**. The canine cough vaccine (kennel cough) is called **Vanguard Rapid Response 3**.

### Storage and Handling

Vaccines must always be stored and administered strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Those include:

- Store at 2-7 degrees C. If accidentally exposed to periods of warmer or colder temperatures, please contact the Animal Health Team at [ah@spca.bc.ca](mailto:ah@spca.bc.ca) for further direction
- Use entire contents for each dose
- Must be used within 1 hour of reconstituting
- Use only new and sterile needles and syringes, wiping the top of the vials with an alcohol moistened swab before drawing up the vaccine and replacing the needle after the vaccine has been drawn into the syringe
- The sticker from the vaccine and the diluent vials should be placed onto the back of your intake form (for initial intakes) or have expiry and lot numbers entered into ShelterBuddy (in the Vet Treatments section).
- Always indicate which limb the vaccine was administered into on the intake form and/or in ShelterBuddy
- If a full or almost full tray of vaccines has expired before you are able to use it, please contact the AH team for further info as Zoetis may be able to replace this tray for us free of charge. Do not use expired vaccines, do not discard them until you hear from [ah@spca.bc.ca](mailto:ah@spca.bc.ca)

## Reactions

- Common post-vaccine reactions include: mild fever; myalgia (muscle pain); reduced appetite and/or activity. A veterinarian should be consulted if this is severe or lasts greater than 48 hours
- More serious vaccine reactions include swelling (edema) of the face, eyelids and lips and the most serious but least common is the life-threatening anaphylactic reaction both of which immediate veterinary intervention is required
- All vaccine reactions must be reported to Animal Health (even if not serious) for tracking purposes and so that reaction reports may be forwarded to Zoetis where appropriate. Financial support may be available for diagnostic and treatment costs related to adverse vaccine reactions.

## Procedure

### DOGS

- Staff are to conduct a thorough physical exam of each incoming dog and assess its health status
- If apparently healthy and in the absence of veterinary proof of acceptable current vaccine status, the first vaccine is to be administered the day of admittance. This includes strays, dogs sheltered “under the Act,” surrenders, pregnant bitches, nursing mothers and compassionate boards
- Exceptions for vaccinating difficult or dangerous dogs may be made upon approval of the Branch Manager or designate
- Mandatory vaccination; poly-valent modified-live virus (MLV) vaccine for Canine Distemper; Adeno II; Parainfluenza; Parvovirus (DAPP combo) administered subcutaneously; and the **intranasal trivalent Kennel Cough vaccine (protects against Bordetella, Parainfluenza, and Adenovirus)**. **\*\*\*Please note that immuno-compromised people should not administer the intranasal trivalent vaccine and should avoid contact with a freshly vaccinated dog day of vaccine administration.**
- If shelter staff rather than a veterinarian are administering the vaccine, then provision must be made for access to a veterinarian in the event of the dog experiencing an adverse reaction
- Staff should be available **for at least 15 minutes and ideally for two hours post-vaccine** for intermittent monitoring. **For puppies, kittens, and animals with no vaccine history the benefit of giving the vaccine generally outweighs the risk** even if staff will not be present for the full two hours.
- For puppies and adult dogs the inclusion of Coronavirus in the DAPP combo is not recommended
- Vaccines containing Leptospirosis are not to be administered
- At present there is no terrestrial Rabies in B.C. and Rabies vaccines are not legally required for companion animals in British Columbia. We therefore do not vaccinate shelter animals against this disease. However, for animals in long-term foster for behavioural reasons, the vaccine should be considered (based on assessed risk of a bite occurring).

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- Vaccines available for other canine diseases are presently not being considered unless or until a specific situation arises for which their use is indicated and may only be done under the direct authority of the Senior Manager, Animal Health
- Vaccines may be purchased using the Medical Supply Order form or from a local veterinarian (only if cost is lower)

### Frequency

- Starting at **6 weeks** of age puppies should be vaccinated with the DAPP combo vaccine every 3 weeks **until twenty weeks of age**, then boosted in 1 year, then every 3 years.
- Dogs **older than 20 weeks** are given one DAPP combo vaccine upon admittance and a booster vaccine 3 weeks later. Repeat this vaccine after one year, then every 3 years.
- Starting at **6 weeks** of age puppies should be vaccinated once with the Intranasal trivalent kennel cough vaccine. Repeat this vaccine yearly.

### Low Stress Handling Tips

- To avoid the sting affect of administering a cold vaccine, remove the diluent from the fridge and warm it up in your hands by gently rolling it back and forth
- A second handler should be available to assist and to offer yummy treats during and right after the vaccine administration.
- Try offering a yummy treat just before, like cheese, hot dogs, chicken or peanut butter (natural) after assuring no personnel on site are allergic to it. If the dog/pup is interested either have the handler offer this treat continuously or smear the treat on an object like the wall, a clipboard, the floor. Then use touch gradient techniques to slowly acclimate the animal to your gentle handling.
- When inserting the needle, a smooth and consistent amount of pressure is best. You will feel the needle “pop” or even “glide” through the skin. If you see the vaccine dripping out as you administer, stop and pull the needle back slightly, then try again (you may have poked through and through the skin).
- If the animal is expressing signs of fear, anxiety or stress (FAS) then please use the 3-second, 3-times rule. This means if a dog/puppy struggles or shows us signs of FAS we allow them 3 seconds to calm. If they do not calm, then we stop what we are doing and adjust our plan. We can make 3 plan adjustments before we need to call off the vaccine. Please alert animal health if you are unable to vaccinate an animal that will be in our care for longer than 24 hours.

## CATS

- Staff are to conduct a thorough physical exam of each incoming cat and assess its health status
- If apparently healthy and in the absence of veterinary proof of acceptable current vaccine status, the first vaccine is to be administered **the day of admittance**. This includes strays, cats sheltered “under the Act,” surrenders, pregnant queens and nursing mothers.

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- Exceptions for vaccinating difficult or dangerous cats may be made upon approval of the Branch Manager or designate
- Mandatory vaccination: poly-valent modified-live virus (MLV) vaccine for: Herpes Virus, Calicivirus, Parvovirus administered by subcutaneous injection over the **right shoulder/upper leg**
- If shelter staff rather than a veterinarian are administering the vaccine, then provision must be made for access to a veterinarian in the event of the cat experiencing an adverse reaction
- Staff should be available for **at least 15 minutes but ideally two hours post-vaccine** for intermittent monitoring. **For puppies, kittens, and animals with no vaccine history the benefit of giving the vaccine generally outweighs the risk** even if staff will not be present for the full two hours.
- Any vaccine fluid that inadvertently is deposited on the skin or fur must be **immediately washed-off**. The Calici viral component if licked could cause oral ulcers!
- At present there is no terrestrial Rabies in B.C. and Rabies vaccines are not legally required for companion animals in British Columbia. We therefore do not vaccinate shelter animals against this disease. However, for animals in long-term foster for behavioural reasons, the vaccine should be considered (based on assessed risk of a bite occurring).
- Vaccines available for other feline diseases are not being considered unless or until a specific situation arises for which their use is indicated and may only be used under the direct authority of the Senior Manager, Animal Health
- Vaccines may be purchased using the Medical Supply Order form or from a local veterinarian (only if cost is lower)

### Frequency

- Starting at **6 weeks of age** kittens should be vaccinated **every 3 weeks until twenty weeks of age**. Repeat this vaccine after one year, then every 3 years.
- Cats **older than 20 weeks** are given one vaccine upon admittance then a **booster 3 weeks** later. Repeat this vaccine after one year, then every 3 years.

### Low Stress Handling Tips

- To avoid the sting affect of administering a cold vaccine, remove the diluent from the fridge and warm it up in your hands by gently rolling it back and forth
- Utilize towel wrapping techniques in fearful animals, exposing only the limb needed (try the scarf wrap [Towel wrapping techniques - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com) )
- A second handler should be available to assist and to offer yummy treats during and right after the vaccine administration
- Try offering wet food just before. Stick to very smelly and enticing types (sardines, tuna, A/D, Recovery, Churu, etc). If kitty is interested use touch gradient techniques to slowly acclimate the animal to your gentle handling.
- When inserting the needle, a smooth and consistent amount of pressure is best. You will feel the needle “pop” or even “glide” through the skin. If you see the vaccine dripping out as you

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administer, stop and pull the needle back slightly, then try again (you may have poked through and through the skin).

- Administration should be over the lower portion of the shoulder area (just above the elbow). This is due to the risk of feline injection site sarcoma's (FISS), which are rare cancerous growths that can appear at the site of vaccine injections. If the vaccine is administered over a limb rather than the upper shoulder or between the shoulder blades, it gives the animal a better chance of surviving (by amputation) the cancerous growth.



- If the animal is expressing signs of fear, anxiety or stress (FAS) then please use the 2-second, 2-times rule. This means if a cat/kitten struggles or shows us signs of FAS we allow them 2 seconds to calm. If they do not calm, then we stop what we are doing and adjust our plan. We can make 2 plan adjustments before we need to call off the vaccine. Please alert animal health if you are unable to vaccinate an animal that will be in our care for longer than 24 hours.