



## **Dog vaccinations – what you need to think about:**

All dogs in the UK are vaccinated against Distemper, Hepatitis and Parvovirus which are the core vaccines, but there are also non-core vaccines which you need to think about.

### ***Leptospirosis***

Leptospirosis (Weil's disease) is a bacterial disease that dogs most commonly contract by coming into contact with rodent urine. Dogs most at risk are those that swim frequently and stable/farm dogs. Leptospirosis can cause serious illness but the risk is dramatically reduced by vaccination.

This is where it gets a bit tricky, as there are two possible vaccines, L2 and L4.

There are different strains of leptospirosis. In the UK 2 strains account for 75% of leptospirosis cases, which are included in the original vaccine, L2. The vast majority of cases seen in this area are covered by L2.

However recent research has identified other strains, which are not covered by the L2 vaccine, currently found in Europe and in certain parts of the UK. This situation will change gradually and we will keep you up to date.

So the new L4 vaccine has been developed, which will provide protection against both the strains found locally, and the additional strains in Europe.

Dogs that don't travel outside the local area should currently be adequately protected with L2, whilst those who travel to Europe and certain regions of the UK will be better protected with L4.

The odd thing is that you cannot switch between the two vaccines without doing a full restart vaccine course. For full protection, a puppy (or adult dog) must have an initial course of two injections using the same vaccine. This course is spaced 2 weeks apart for L2 and 4 weeks apart for L4. Then annual booster vaccinations are given with the same vaccine again. So you can't mix and match.

### ***Kennel Cough***

"Kennel cough" is the name given to a group of viruses and bacteria that cause upper respiratory symptoms. The classic symptom of this is a nasty cough which can last for weeks and is highly contagious between dogs.

Dogs most at risk are those that socialise with many other dogs, especially in close quarters, for example: dogs staying at a boarding kennel or with dog sitters, dogs who walk with other dog walkers, go to dog shows or training classes and really friendly dogs who love to play with other dogs they meet on walks.

Similar to the influenza injection for people (which contains different strains in different years), the kennel cough vaccination will reduce the risk of infection with the most common strains of virus and bacteria, but won't protect against every possible cause of upper respiratory disease.

### ***So have a think about these vaccination decisions:***

- Do you want your dog to be vaccinated with L2 or L4?
- Do you want to include the kennel cough vaccination?

We can answer any questions you have and help you decide what the risk of disease is for your dog.