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Why you should not vaccinate your own pets:

There are several great reasons why you should not vaccinate your own pets with vaccines. First of all, written instructions provided with the over-the-counter vaccines cannot adequately educate you on proper vaccine administration. Would you vaccinate your own child for measles if the pharmacist provided you with the vaccine and syringe? Also, injury to yourself or others can occur because of lack of training. Children can pick up a needle and stick themselves, or you may be bitten while attempting to vaccinate your pet.

Although you may feel that vaccines purchased over-the-counter at a feed store or other non-veterinary location can save you money, they are often improperly handled and thus ineffective. Therefore, they are actually a waste of money because by the time you purchase them and administer them, your pet is actually getting no protection. Pets vaccinated with over-the-counter vaccines have been known to contract the viruses they were supposedly vaccinated for, such as parvovirus. They can get very sick or even die from those viruses that their owners thought they were protected against.

You have no control over the handling of the vaccine before you purchased it. Veterinarians know where their vaccines come from and choose them based on effectiveness and handling. Veterinarians, unlike owners, are also equipped to handle any complications associated with vaccine administration such as severe allergic reactions. Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may occur following routine vaccine administration and left untreated can lead to the death of a pet.

Another reason you should not vaccinate your own pets is that syringes and needles are considered hazardous medical waste. Disposal of such items in a landfill can lead to devastating consequences for animals, humans, and the environment.

Finally, vaccines administered to an unhealthy animal may be ineffective or may even harm the pet. No animal should be vaccinated without a prior physical examination performed by a licensed veterinarian. In fact, the physical examination performed during a visit to your veterinarian to get your pet's vaccines is the most important part of the visit! **PETS NEED REGULAR VETERINARY CARE.** Just as your child needs regular check-ups, your pet does too! Puppies and kittens should be examined every three to four weeks to ensure proper growth, diet, parasite control and behavior. Adult dogs and cats should have a complete physical every year as early detection of tumors, diseases, and parasites help ensure a better life for your pet AND your family.

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