

Why Re-Vaccination is the WORST Reason for Routine Vet Visits...

According to a recent Bayer Veterinary Care Usage Study, a majority of U.S. pet parents don't see the need for regular veterinary care for their non-human family members.

A few takeaways from the study:

- Over 60 percent of dog owners and nearly 70 percent of cat owners are skeptical about the need for routine vet visits.
- Owners of older animals and cats are especially reluctant to take their pets for vet checkups.
- Most pet owners are unpleasantly surprised by the cost of veterinary care these days.

According to Veterinary Practice News, the six root causes for declining vet visits are:

1. Fallout from the current economic climate.
2. The ability of pet owners to get their animals vaccinated outside the vet's office at mobile clinics, shelters and pet stores.
3. Growing use of the Internet to research and find answers when a pet is sick or hurt.
4. The reluctance of cat owners to deal with a situation of 'feline resistance' to vet visits.
5. A general opinion among pet owners that regular vet checkups are simply unnecessary, especially for older pets and those kept indoors.
6. The perceived high cost of veterinary care.

Dr. Becker's Comments:

Since lots of people don't visit their own doctor until illness strikes, it's not surprising to me so many pet owners avoid the vet's office as well.

In my opinion, in many ways the traditional medical establishment itself has set the stage for sick visits, not well visits. The approach of conventional Western medicine, both human and veterinary, is reactive rather than proactive.

The fact is, with the exception of a handful of common screening procedures and tests, traditionally trained MDs and DVMs wait for full-blown illness to show itself, and then try to cure it with drugs, surgery, or a combination.

With that general approach, it's no wonder people aren't rushing to doctors or veterinarians for checkups to help them or their pets stay well. Traditional medicine doesn't have a lot to offer those of us – or our pets – who aren't showing signs of significant illness.

Why Take My Pet to the Vet If He's Healthy?

I practice *proactive* veterinary medicine. I want to see your pet when he's healthy, so I can help you help him stay that way.

My goal with my patients is to maintain them in the 'white zone' of health, first, and treat disease (the 'black zone') as necessary.

In between the white and black zones is the grey zone, in which an animal can be moving in either direction – toward disease or toward health. I do a lot of my best work with pets in the grey zone, where I'm often able to stop or significantly slow progress toward full-blown illness.

For example, let's say your pet's blood test results come back and some number is a bit off but not yet out of the established 'normal' range. Many vets would take a wait-and-see approach because the number is not (yet) out of whack enough to warrant further action.

In contrast, my approach and the approach of any proactive practitioner would be to probe deeper to find the root cause of the not-quite-normal blood test result.

Chances are something is going on inside your pet's body which is moving her health from the white zone into the grey zone. We want to find out what that something is and deal with it before it becomes an expensive, debilitating or even life-threatening health crisis.

Lots of pet parents are amazed and hugely relieved to learn many disease processes can be halted or reversed with small dietary or lifestyle changes, often coupled with appropriate natural healing therapies.

Re-vaccination Should NOT Be a Reason for Regular Vet Checkups!

It's discouraging to learn from this study that pet owners are now seeking out other sources for re-vaccinations, like pet stores and mobile clinics.

And it's certainly not the other sources that concern me. It's the re-vaccinations.

Yearly re-vaccinations are unnecessary and dangerous for too many pets. These [immunizations should not be used to promote annual veterinary visits](#).

It's really tragic so many pet owners have been led to believe their pet's health is all about those yearly vaccinations. *Nothing could be further from the truth.*

At my clinic, Natural Pet Animal Hospital, I tailor vaccine protocols to minimize risk and maximize protection, taking into account the breed, background, nutritional status and overall vitality of the pet.

With healthy puppies, for example, I generally follow the protocol set by Dr. Ron Schultz, professor and chair of the Department of Pathobiological Sciences at the University of Wisconsin Veterinary School and an expert on vaccine effectiveness.

Per Dr. Shultz's protocol, we provide a single parvo and distemper vaccine at or before 12 weeks of age, and a second set after 14 weeks. We then titer two weeks after the last set and if the dog has been successfully immunized, she's protected *for life*.

If titer tests on any pet no matter the age indicate vaccine levels are low, we recommend a booster for only the specific virus or viruses that titered low, and only for those to which the animal has a real risk of exposure.

We do not use or recommend combination vaccines (six to eight viruses in one shot), which is the traditional yearly booster.

For those pet owners adamantly opposed to any vaccine or for animals that have had past reactions to vaccines, we also offer the option to boost a pet's immunity naturally with homeopathic nosodes rather than traditional vaccination. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of treatment with nosodes cannot be guaranteed and will not result in a measurable titer.

Why I Encourage Routine Wellness Exams

I recommend twice yearly wellness examinations to my Natural Pet clients.

A thorough, tip-of-nose to tip-of-tail professional exam every six months is the best way for you and your vet to detect and stay on top of any changes in your pet's health. This is especially true for animals getting up in years.

It's somewhat the nature of humans to avoid situations in which they fear they may hear bad news. It's my opinion this is another reason many pet owners avoid routine vet visits. It's the old 'ignorance is bliss' approach.

Needless to say, this isn't a wise outlook when it comes to issues of health.

That's why I want to emphasize, again, that in the case of a developing illness in your pet, [often a few simple lifestyle changes are all that is needed](#) to return your companion to glowing good health.

Many diseases seem to come on quickly and progress rapidly. The reality is there are almost always subtle changes taking place long before there is evidence of a full-blown illness.

It's those subtle changes I look for in routine wellness exams, so we can take action right away and hopefully prevent a developing illness from destroying your precious pet's health.

For the same reason, I also recommend you perform regular [at-home wellness exams](#) on your pet between vet visits.

Choosing a Vet

As always, I strongly encourage you find a [holistic/integrative vet](#) who will partner with you to keep your pet healthy. If you have a feline not fond of leaving the house, seek out a holistic vet that makes house calls.

Holistic-oriented veterinarians are licensed DVMs with additional education and experience in alternative methods of healing such as homeopathy, natural supplements, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), acupuncture, etc.

They are also more likely to titer than vaccinate, and to use single vaccinations rather than shots containing vaccines for several different pathogens.

Many holistic vets are also well informed about [species-appropriate nutrition](#) and can provide guidance in the best way to nourish your pet.

If you can partner with [a vet whose practice philosophy appeals to you](#), together you can build an affordable wellness strategy to provide your pet with vibrant health and a long life.