



Understanding Vaccines and How They Help Your New Pet

You may notice on your new pet's medical record that it has received some vaccines. These have been given to help ensure your pet's safety.

There is a struggle going on inside every animal that passes through our doors. Bacteria and viruses are working to increase their numbers within your new friend while its body works to reduce them. Vaccines are our way to help in this struggle.

In the immune system, the best defense is a good offense. The immune system works in three steps. First, it identifies the disease as something that doesn't belong. Then it builds cells to recognize the disease in the future to fight infections. Lastly, when the disease is recognized by the body, it produces antibodies. Each antibody is only effective against the virus or bacteria it was made to fight. Sometimes, many bacteria or viruses arrive at once, and the body can't keep up with their ability to multiply. This is when sickness happens. Vaccines are a tool to safely trick the body into building reserves of antibodies for specific diseases.

Vaccines can be thought of as disease impersonators: all of the appearances of the disease, but almost none of the danger. Vaccines can come in many forms, but they all work the same way. They get the body to recognize a disease and produce antibodies for it.

Here at the Santa Fe Animal Shelter, the cards are stacked against us. Animals coming in are often scared and stressed, and stress weakens the immune system. Also, many dogs and cats that come in bring disease along with them. Because of these factors, the Santa Fe Animal Shelter can be a difficult place to stay healthy without vaccines. Therefore, we vaccinate more often than would be necessary outside of the shelter.

When your new friend is at home, follow the vaccine protocol set forth by your veterinarian. As trained professionals they will be able to assess your pet's needs depending on where your pet travels: home, the dog park, or local trails.

Remember, in the immune system, the best defense is a good defense. See a local veterinarian about what vaccines are right for your pet.