

Why Every Puppy Should Have an Antibody Titer Test at 20 Weeks: Confirming Vaccine Protection Before Adulthood

Confirming immunity at 20 weeks helps veterinarians verify that puppies are protected after vaccination before entering higher-risk environments.

CA, UNITED STATES, August 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most puppies complete their core vaccination series between 14 and 16 weeks of age and are then considered ready to begin exploring the world. While this vaccination schedule provides excellent protection for the vast majority of puppies, vaccination alone cannot confirm that an individual puppy has developed protective immunity.



For this reason, the 2024 World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Vaccination Guidelines recommend antibody titer testing after completion of the puppy vaccination series to confirm that protective immunity has been achieved. Rather than assuming every puppy has responded to vaccination, veterinarians can verify protection before the puppy is exposed to boarding facilities, dog parks, training classes, daycare, or other environments where infectious diseases may be encountered.

Why Doesn't Every Vaccinated Puppy Develop Protective Immunity?

Modern vaccines are highly effective and have dramatically reduced the incidence of serious infectious diseases such as canine parvovirus, distemper, and adenovirus. However, several factors can occasionally prevent a puppy from developing adequate protective antibody levels despite being vaccinated according to current recommendations.

One of the most common reasons is maternal antibody interference. Antibodies passed from

the mother provide important early protection but can also neutralize vaccine viruses before the puppy's own immune system has the opportunity to respond. Because maternal antibody levels decline at different rates in every puppy, there is no single vaccination schedule that guarantees successful immunization for every individual.

Other factors, including normal variation in immune responses and, on occasion, practical aspects surrounding vaccination, may also influence whether protective immunity develops.

Although these situations are uncommon, they highlight an important clinical reality: vaccination and confirmed immunity are not always the same thing.

Why Test at 20 Weeks?

By approximately 20 weeks of age, maternal antibodies have generally declined sufficiently to allow accurate interpretation of antibody levels. This makes it the ideal time to confirm whether a puppy has successfully responded to its vaccination series.

A positive antibody titer demonstrates that the puppy has developed protective antibodies against the core viral diseases included in the test. Numerous studies have shown that protective antibody levels correlate strongly with immunity against canine parvovirus, canine distemper virus, and canine adenovirus.

If antibody levels are not detected, the veterinarian can administer an additional vaccine dose and retest several weeks later. In the rare event that protective antibodies still fail to develop, the puppy can be identified as a potential vaccine non-responder and managed appropriately throughout its life.

Confirming Protection Before Real-World Exposure

The weeks following completion of the puppy vaccination series often coincide with an important period of socialization. Puppies begin attending obedience classes, visiting dog parks, staying in boarding facilities, and interacting with unfamiliar dogs.

For most puppies, these experiences are both safe and beneficial. However, they also represent opportunities for exposure to highly contagious viral diseases if adequate immunity has not yet developed.

Confirming antibody levels before these new experiences provides confidence that the puppy is truly protected rather than simply assumed to be protected. This approach allows veterinarians to identify the small number of puppies that require additional vaccination before they encounter higher-risk environments, helping reduce the likelihood of preventable infection.

during this critical stage of development.

Supporting Evidence-Based Preventive Care with VacciCheck®

VacciCheck® is an in-clinic antibody titer test developed by Biogal Labs that measures protective antibodies against the three canine core viruses, canine parvovirus (CPV), canine distemper virus (CDV), and canine adenovirus (CAV), using a small blood sample in approximately 23 minutes.

By providing rapid, semi-quantitative antibody results during the appointment, VacciCheck enables veterinarians to confirm whether a puppy has successfully responded to vaccination and make evidence-based decisions about whether additional vaccination is necessary.

As veterinary medicine continues to move toward more individualized preventive care, confirming immunity rather than assuming protection represents an important step forward. Antibody titer testing at 20 weeks provides veterinarians and pet owners with greater confidence that each puppy has developed the protection needed to safely begin the next stage of life.

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