

# Can my pet be **vaccinated?**



**BSAVA**

BRITISH SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

# Can my pet be vaccinated?

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, pets should only be vaccinated if your vet considers there is a real and current risk to animal health and welfare.**

The pandemic has dramatically altered the way in which vets work. Please remember it is **NOT** 'business as usual' for veterinary practices. At this time, UK vets can:

- work to maintain the food supply chain (this applies to farm animals only)
- provide urgent and emergency care to protect health and welfare

Initial measures put in place to stem the spread of the virus meant that routine pet vaccinations were stopped. However, as social distancing measures have been extended, suspending all vaccinations may compromise the health and welfare of some pets.

Every vaccination must be balanced with the fact that the vet, their team and the pet owner will be travelling away from their homes and coming into contact with people and objects they otherwise wouldn't.

**Your vet will therefore do a risk-benefit analysis before every vaccination, and will only vaccinate your pet if there is a real and current risk to animal health and welfare.**

Please note: This situation is rapidly evolving, and advice may change as government guidance is updated.

# Are there risks if I don't vaccinate my pet?

**In the long-term, vaccinations are essential to prevent infectious disease outbreaks in pets. However, many vaccinations can be safely delayed for a short period.**

To decrease the human health risk of COVID-19, it is better to delay vaccination for many pets.

Please be assured that most previously vaccinated pets are at **low risk** of becoming sick from the disease they are being vaccinated against for short periods of time after their booster becomes due.

# What should I do if my pet is due to be vaccinated?

**1**

Phone your veterinary practice. Please don't visit the practice without first calling ahead.

**2**

If you have changed practice since your pet's last vaccination, please have all relevant information to-hand to answer any questions.

**3**

Make your vet aware if you have COVID-19, or are in a household where there is a positive or suspected case of COVID-19.

**4**

Please respect your vet's professional judgement. They have a responsibility to protect the safety of their clients, their staff, their families and themselves.

**5**

Please be patient if the process takes a little longer than usual as most practices are operating with fewer staff than normal.

# How will my vet decide if my pet needs to be vaccinated?

**Your vet will make a decision based on your pet's individual circumstances and taking into consideration a number of risk-factors, including:**

**1**

Your pet's age

**2**

Your pet's vaccination history

**3**

Incidence of infectious disease in your local area

**4**

The number and species of other pets in your household

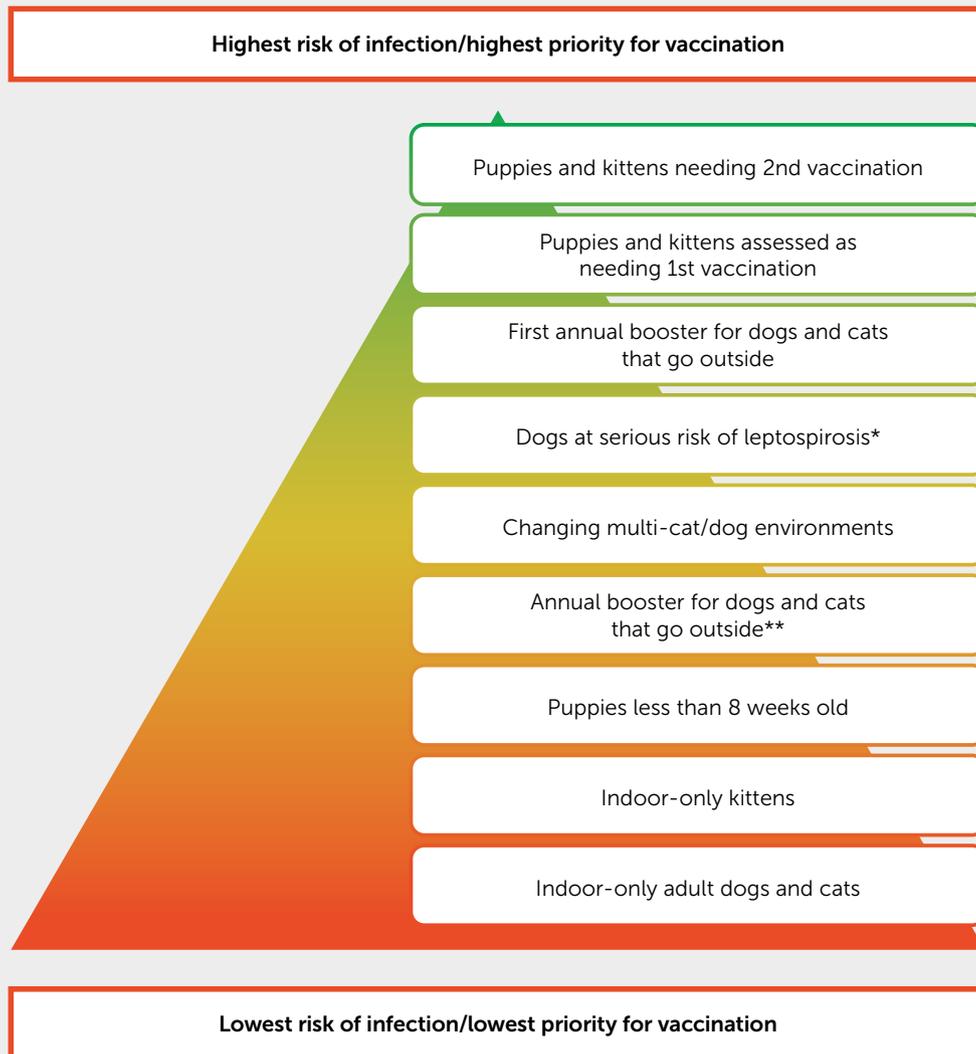
**5**

Your pet's lifestyle. For example:

- Farm dogs, working terriers, working gundogs may have a higher risk of leptospirosis compared to dogs living mainly indoors.
- Kittens who live with other older cats are at higher risk of infections such as "cat-flu" compared to adult cats living alone.
- Indoor compared to outdoor rabbits.
- If you are a 'key worker' and your dog is in day-care.

Your vet may suggest you delay your pet's vaccination if your pet is considered to be low-risk at the moment. Adult booster vaccines can be safely delayed for most pets for three months (unless your vet advises a high-risk situation).

**The BSAVA risk pyramid helps vets decide if vaccination is needed during this period.**



**Highest risk of infection/highest priority for vaccination**

Puppies and kittens needing 2nd vaccination

Puppies and kittens assessed as needing 1st vaccination

First annual booster for dogs and cats that go outside

Dogs at serious risk of leptospirosis\*

Changing multi-cat/dog environments

Annual booster for dogs and cats that go outside\*\*

Puppies less than 8 weeks old

Indoor-only kittens

Indoor-only adult dogs and cats

**Lowest risk of infection/lowest priority for vaccination**

# What can I do to help lower the risk to my pet during the pandemic?

During this period, all puppies, kittens and young rabbits should be kept indoors until they are vaccinated so that they do not come into contact with animals from other households or wildlife. It is important that other animals of the same species in the same household are vaccinated before they can be introduced to the new puppy/kitten/rabbit.

**› If you are thinking of letting your pet into a confined and secure area outside, please discuss this with your vet who will be best placed to advise on your individual circumstances.**

## Visiting a veterinary practice

**If vaccination is required, please follow the instructions given by your practice and be aware of the relevant government advice on travel, social distancing and hand washing.**

If you have COVID-19, or are from a household where there is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, you must NOT visit the practice. Please phone the vet to discuss alternative arrangements if your pet needs to be seen.

Many practices will ask owners to wait outside and operate a closed-door policy with measures to hand over pets safely to staff whilst adhering strictly to social distancing guidelines.

## Microchipping

**For pets who have not been implanted with a microchip, if vaccination is given then the pet should be microchipped at the same time.**

# Information for breeders, rehoming centres and shelters

**If you are a breeder or run a rehoming centre or a shelter then please contact your vet to discuss options for vaccinations.**

For more information, please visit the Canine Feline Sector Group (CFSG) website:  
<http://www.cfsg.org.uk>

## Additional resources

For more support and advice for looking after your pet during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit <https://www.bsava.com/adviceforpetowners>

**Additional information** on COVID-19 is available from BSAVA:  
<https://www.bsava.com/COVID-19>

**BSAVA Petsavers Guides** on puppies, kittens and rabbits:  
<http://www.petsavers.org.uk/Pet-guides>



# The British Small Animal Veterinary Association

## Doing the best, together, for small animal health and wellbeing

The BSAVA is the membership association for small animal veterinary professionals. For over 60 years we have been promoting excellence in small animal practice by sharing and developing skills and knowledge within the profession.

We work in the UK and internationally to facilitate training, research and the development of policy. Each year we deliver quality education courses, host the largest small animal Congress in Europe, publish books, manuals, apps and journals designed to support the professional development of vet surgeons and nurses.

## To find out more about the BSAVA visit [bsava.com](https://www.bsava.com)

