



# Arbor Animal News

A Quarterly publication from Arbor Animal Clinic

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## Feline Rabies

### Vaccine Shortage

Many of our cat owning clients are aware that the vaccine that we give cats to protect them from Rabies was not available for about six weeks. The shortage brought to light some very important questions and concerns that I would like to share with our clients.

Our clinic has used the Purevax line of cat vaccines since they became available. They were produced in direct response to a very real concern that had been discovered affecting cats. Some of the vaccines that became commonly used in the 1970's and 1980's were shown to cause a type of cancer where the injections were given. Although it only occurred in a tiny percentage of vaccinated cats, the cancer is a terrible consequence. This was determined to be caused by adjuvants—or additives added to make the immune response better. Aluminum used as an adjuvant was the common culprit.

These same adjuvants did not appear to have any effect on other animals including dogs and horses. Cats being the truly unique creatures that they are were the exception. Purevax vaccines were made with no adjuvants and thereby avoided the very real risk that the other vaccines posed. This is why we have used these and only these since they became available. The problem is—these other vaccines are still in very common use, everywhere, including Austin, Texas. Here's why:

When Texas and other states licensed Rabies vaccines for three year usage, the Purevax vaccine was only labelled for one year. This led many practices to choose the three year products that were known to create the cancer risk for the convenience of three year protection.

The vast majority of cat owners know little or nothing about the differences between the two vaccine types and therefore are taking this risk unknowingly with their cats. These newer and safer vaccines cost more to produce and this added cost is also a reason for the older vaccines to continue to be so commonly used.

It certainly highlights that the decisions and choices that the veterinarians you choose make very real differences in the overall care your pets are delivered. Our vets have been using these safer vaccines for so long that we often forget to explain why our practice requires your cat to receive a Rabies vaccine annually (the other cat vaccines are good for three years) while a neighbor's cat may have gotten a three year Rabies shot.

Thank you to all of our clients whose cats came due for their annual visit during this shortage. We tried very hard to help all of you understand the importance of the decision you were asked to make. Simply stated, I would not vaccinate my own cats with the older vaccines so I certainly would not recommend it for our clients' cats!

All dogs and cats must be current on Rabies vaccination by state law. This is an unavoidable and real requirement. It can be very bad if a cat or dog bites a human and the pet is not current for Rabies vaccination. Occasionally the person bitten will be advised by their doctor to undergo post exposure protocols and legal claims for the cost of this are sought by the bitten person. Please keep your pets current on their vaccinations—it really matters!

If you have any questions about the vaccination schedule that our clinic uses—and why! - please allow our doctors to inform you. There are many vaccines on the market that our practice does not use or recommend. The schedule of how often to vaccinate that we use is also up-to-date and very well considered. We are very proud of the many choices that we make on behalf of the safety of your pets, from vaccines to anesthesia monitoring. Thank you!

## Health Concerns

□ Despite the efforts by our profession to treat and prevent **obesity** in our pets, estimates of pet obesity have not really changed. Approximately 57% of cats and 52% of dogs are overweight. Osteoarthritis, Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and decreased life spans are all linked to pet obesity. Ask our doctors if you think your pet may be at risk. We often make specific recommendations on food types (especially important for cats) and portion control. Let's get fit!

□ **Dermatitis** in dogs and **cystitis** in cats are the most common pet ailments for the last two years. Allergies in dogs often leads to the skin problems that we see in dogs. Cystitis (bladder inflammation) in cats is often treated with diet changes and prevention of cystitis also involves choice of diet and obesity prevention.

□ **Pet Insurance** is becoming more and more popular. We get many questions about pet insurance and are happy to help. Texas is in the top five states for owners having pet insurance and this can really help when an unforeseen injury or illness happens to your pet. We accept all pet insurances and we recommend and have the information and brochures for Trupanion and VPI companies. Both of these are good companies that we trust. Like all insurance, you hope that you never need it and the insurance packages and products vary widely. But it is worth looking into and starting when you first acquire a puppy or kitten is often the best time. Feel free to ask our staff about pet insurance if you think it may be something you would like to have.

