

ELISA Tests to Facilitate the Right Time to Vaccinate Your Pups

Maternal antibodies transferred from the bitch to the pup via colostrums ordinarily starts to decline at around 5-6 weeks of age. Research proves that 90% of pups lose immunity taken from the dam at three months of age, while 100% of pups are completely void of maternal immunity at four months of age. This in mind, the best time to vaccinate your pup would probably be at four months of age. However, this does not take into consideration the possibility of the pups losing maternal antibodies early. Therefore, some vaccinate at four weeks, some at five and others at six weeks of age.

There are a lot of different literature recommending different vaccination regimens for pups, which then should we follow? No one text is entirely correct, since a myriad of variables are in play when considering your pup's immune system. This in mind, we should consider the following : When was the bitch's last immunization? How much maternal antibodies does the pup possess? To what environment is the pup exposed to? These are some of the questions that could affect your pup's immunity prior to vaccination. Since these are unquantifiable, the only way to know for certain when the right time to vaccinate would be is to have the pup's antibodies checked prior to vaccination. This is done through a blood test using ELISA (Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay). ELISA is a diagnostic tool to check for the pup's immunoglobulin G (Ig G) titers. The higher the pup's Ig G titers are, the more protected it is against a specific type of disease. At around 5 weeks of age, is about the time when maternal antibodies decline, the Ig G titers are examined through ELISA. A tooth from an ELISA comb will give the answer to our questions. Below we have a sample of this tooth.

The topmost portion is what we call the control while the middle portion is the Ig G titers for parvovirus and the lowest portion is Ig G titers for distemper. The shade intensities of these three results are compared to a color gradient scale determine the protectiveness of these titers. Ordinarily, a darker shade of the parvovirus and distemper portion comparative to the control would indicate a high protective titer against the disease mentioned, therefore indicating that it is not the right time to vaccinate. Maternal antibodies still present in the pup will render the vaccination useless, while the vaccine given will concurrently deplete the maternal antibodies.

In essence, vaccination done with maternal antibodies present is not only useless, but will also most likely compromise your pup's immune system by depleting maternal antibodies still present. This in mind, it is no longer a surprise when a pup vaccinated 2 or 3 times can still be infected by parvo, distemper and the like. Early vaccinations as well as the number of times the animal was vaccinated does not mean that your pup is protected!

Similarly, when your pup has received vaccinations (even if the timing is right!) it is best to make sure that they have mounted a sufficient response to the vaccine by doing another ELISA Ig G titer test. Once the complete vaccination regimen is completed, you may make sure that your pup is protected against these deadly diseases by checking Ig G titers (which by now is no longer from the maternal antibodies passed on by the dam, but is instead achieved through vaccination). Play it safe. Make sure that your loved one is protected. Remember, prevention is still the best medicine.

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