

Test may help decrease yearly pet vaccines

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Scientists at Kansas State University's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory have modified a test that measures an animal's immune response to the rabies virus, a change that will cost pet owners less money and may help reduce the number of yearly vaccines for pets.

The scientists say testing an animal for titers, or antibodies capable of neutralizing [rabies](#), is a valid indication of the animal's resistance to the rabies virus. When the titer test measures 0.5 international units per milliliter or higher, the pet would be considered protected and may only need a booster if bitten or otherwise exposed to the [rabies virus](#), depending on local rabies regulations.

All animals should be vaccinated at an early age with what are known as core vaccines, or those considered by leading veterinary associations to provide protection against the diseases of highest risk to each species. In the past, vaccinated pets would receive a yearly booster for those core vaccines.

The test developed at Kansas State University is not yet accepted by national veterinary organizations as a standard for indicating protection against rabies, though measuring titers currently is used for determining whether cats and dogs need a vaccination for other high-risk diseases.

"In both domestic cats and dogs, there is a positive correlation between rabies neutralizing antibody titers and the level of protection," said Rolan Davis, a researcher in the Kansas State University Rabies Laboratory, one of only two commercial labs in the U.S. that performs rabies

antibody testing, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

But yearly vaccines can sometimes create other health concerns. In cats, for example, yearly vaccinations have been linked to feline injection site sarcomas. Kansas State University's titer test for rabies could save a pet from one more injection at the yearly exam.

"We are certainly not against vaccinations; we are against rabies," Davis said. "We are looking for the best ways to prevent rabies in animals and humans."

Titer tests are commonly available at your local veterinarian's office. At Kansas State University, a titer test for rabies costs \$30; [pet owners](#) who would like titer tests for other core vaccines can pay \$50 to cover rabies plus the three most common diseases for either a dog or cat.

Kansas State University veterinarians emphasize that all pets should be vaccinated at an early age. Options for pets that have never been vaccinated and that have been exposed to rabies are limited. Generally, the options for unvaccinated dogs and cats are euthanasia or a six-month quarantine in a specialized facility.

More information: More information about rabies, core vaccines and the Kansas State University Rabies Laboratory is available at ksvdl.org/rabies-laboratory, or by contacting the lab at clientcare@ksvdl.org or 866-512-5650.

Provided by Kansas State University

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