

## Titer Tests for Dogs

**Leslie Sinclair, DVM explains how to avoid unnecessary dog vaccinations.**

*Leslie Sinclair, DVM*

Q. What is a vaccine titer test, and should I have one done on my dog before she is vaccinated?

Leslie Sinclair, DVM says: As we learn more about how a dogs immune system responds to vaccination, were realizing that some dogs do not need to be vaccinated against every common disease every year and that unnecessary vaccines can even be harmful. Antibodies are protective proteins in a dogs body that recognize and respond to infection. A titer test detects the amount of antibodies your dog has to a particular disease, so it has been proposed as a method of determining whether a dog really needs to be vaccinated against that disease. There is a great deal of controversy about the use of this test, however, because the results are not always conclusive. It is possible for some dogs to have titer test results that indicate they are protected from a particular disease when in fact they are not. And some dogs tests suggest no protection, when in fact their immune system is capable of warding off the disease. Performing a vaccine titer test is also much more costly than simply vaccinating the dog.

In the near future, vaccine titer tests may become the norm for evaluating a dogs immunity against disease, but many questions still need to be answered. For now, these tests can help you and your veterinarian make informed decisions about your dogs need for vaccination against specific diseases, but you need to consider other factors, such as your dogs age, vaccination history, exposure to other dogs, and general health.

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