

# VACCINES AND BOOSTERS:

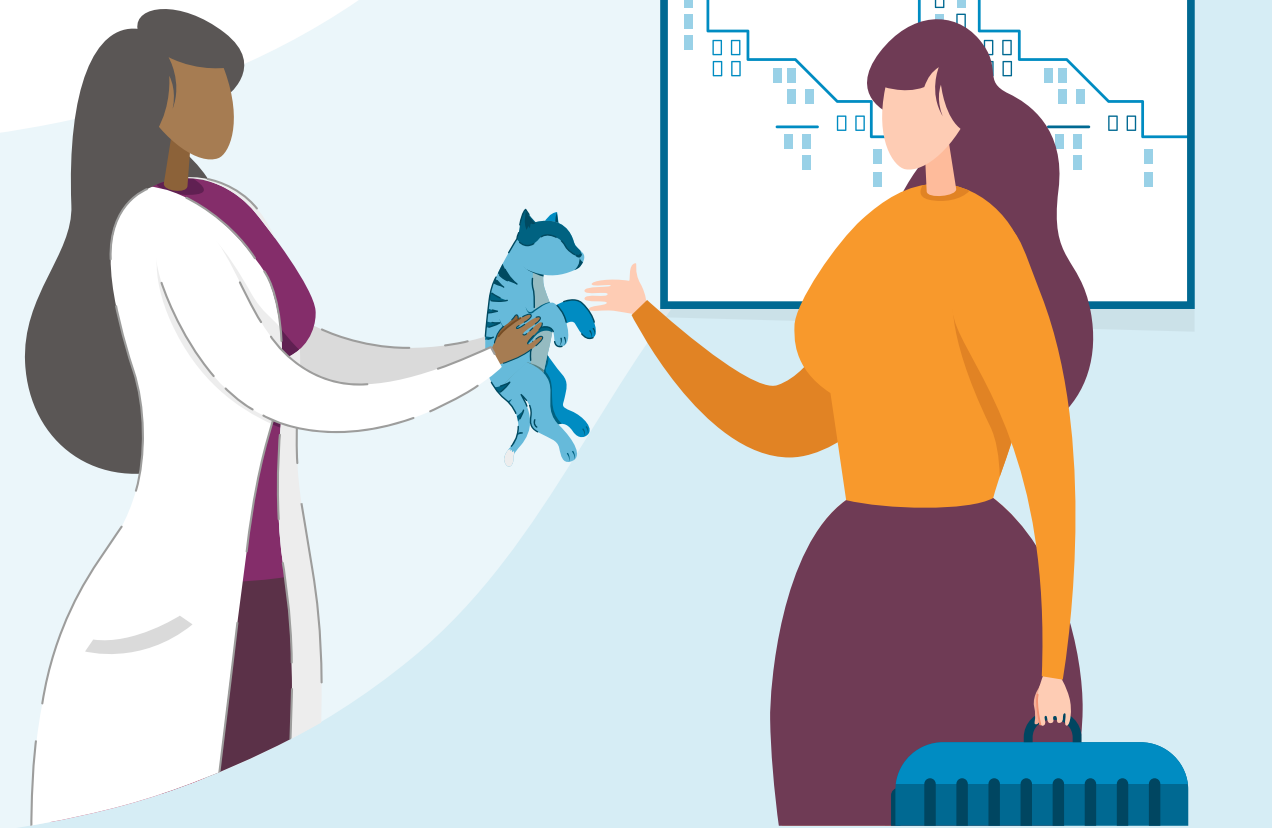
The **Whys** and **Hows** of Building Immunity in Your Pets

## What is a vaccine?

A vaccine is a preparation that helps the body's immune system get ready to fight disease-causing organisms.

## How does a vaccine create immunity?

When the immune system "sees" an unfamiliar microbe (bacteria or virus) as part of a vaccine, it "learns" how to produce antibodies to combat those microbes. Antibodies are what help the body fight infection and protect it from getting the same illness again. If the immune system "sees" or is exposed to the same microbe again in the future (e.g., by natural infection), it's able to produce antibodies faster. Vaccinations are intended to reduce the severity of the illness, and/or prevent the disease entirely, by creating immunity.



## Why do puppies and kittens need vaccines?

Puppies and kittens are born with antibodies and receive some antibodies from their mother while nursing. However, these maternal antibodies slowly decline over time. A vaccine ensures that puppies and kittens develop their own antibodies to replace the ones from their mother.



## Why are boosters important?

In most properly vaccinated pets, a vaccine's immunity should last more than a year, and often several years. However, immunity does decline with time. To "boost" a pet's antibody levels, revaccinations have proven very successful.

Think of the immune system like a charging station with each vaccine being a different device that needs to be charged according to its own schedule. For some vaccines, the charge might hold for 2-3 years before boosters are needed. For others, yearly recharging is recommended.

**Your veterinarian will discuss the need and frequency of vaccinations and boosters for your pet based on your pet's needs and lifestyle.**

