

VACCINATIONS



Information on Feline Vaccination Dangers and Concerns
By Michelle T. Bernard, Author of Raising Cats Naturally

Because of the length of this article, a printable version is available for your convenience.

Except for what's required by law (rabies), most of my cats are not vaccinated. I haven't vaccinated a cat in over ten years. Now that I'm living in the country, my cats even spend some time outdoors and still that does not compel me to vaccinate them. You may wonder why I am not afraid of horrible diseases my cats may catch because they are not vaccinated. I'm more afraid of the potential of chronic disease caused by vaccines than I am of the diseases the vaccines are supposed to prevent. Except for the panleukopenia vaccine, I am not convinced vaccinations provide any protection at all.

Because I am a holistic breeder, I take the approach that if one of my cats gets sick, I'll deal with it. I do not go to great effort to prevent disease. I do the best I can in feeding my cats a healthy diet and keeping their environment healthy. I believe that alone will prevent most diseases cats suffer with today. So far, it has worked very well.

I believe not only does vaccination make a cat more susceptible to chronic disease, it also may cause chronic disease. Up until now I have not said a lot about my feelings about vaccination and left it to others to say.

Writing this piece has been a learning experience for me. When I first discovered homeopathy I learned that vaccinating was contrary to homeopathic care. I did not question not vaccinating my adult cats. When I started breeding and was exposed to the fear of disease that so plagues breeders, I thought I should vaccinate for panleukopenia only, as that was the one deadly disease. As it turned out, the kittens I produced early on in my breeding career had such problems with upper respiratory infections I was not able to vaccinate them because they were too sick to vaccinate. Quite frankly, whenever I purchased a vial of vaccine, I was almost afraid to open the vial. It seemed so darned toxic to me! A vial of deadly disease sitting in my refrigerator was probably best left sealed or even better, thrown away. The best thing I did for my cats was throwing those vials of vaccines away and never buying anymore.

At one time, I belonged to two large conventional cat-breeding lists, Fancier's Health and Feline Health. The only benefit I got from these lists is to read about the diseases and problems my cats do not suffer with because of how I raise them. This has further instilled my resolve not to vaccinate and to continue to feed them a raw diet. It never fails to amaze me the drugs other breeders administer to their cats and their vaccination protocols. Imagine vaccinating kittens before they open their eyes and vaccinating pregnant queens; how crazy can it get? No wonder why purebred cats can be very unhealthy and have such a bad reputation with many veterinarians.

Dog breeders are well ahead of cat breeders in taking a more natural approach to raising their animals. There are dog breeders who have been avoiding vaccinations for 20 or more years. These natural dog breeders have found that their unvaccinated dogs have titers (a blood test that tests presence of antibodies) to parvo and other diseases normally vaccinated against. The presence of antibodies does not mean the animal will not contract the disease or is immune to it. It does tend to be sufficient evidence to convince caregivers and conventional veterinarians that the animal does not need to be vaccinated against the disease. Then again, if the titer is low, most caregivers and veterinarians will believe the animal needs to be vaccinated against the disease. Unfortunately it is not that simple.

Think of antibodies as an alarm system. If the alarms are sounding (meaning a high titer) it only means the animal may have been exposed to the particular disease. Just because the alarms are silent (meaning a low titer) does not mean the alarm system is not armed and ready. A titer is like almost everything else surrounding conventional medicine: a number or a measurement which in the grand scheme of things means little. Judge the animal, not the numbers. If the animal is healthy, it should be able to survive exposure to disease.

Some natural dog breeders will vaccinate one puppy in a litter and allow that puppy to "vaccinate" the other puppies. This is all fine and good, except for the poor puppy that was vaccinated who may suffer from chronic disease from the vaccine. I'm not willing to risk any of my kittens in this manner nor do I feel it's necessary to expose my cats to disease in this manner. Another method of "vaccination" for puppies and dogs is to take them to dog parks and obedience or handling classes. Because puppies and dogs who are vaccinated with modified live vaccinations can "shed" the disease, exposure to vaccinated dogs can help build immunity in an unvaccinated puppy or dog. Cats prefer to romp at home and certainly do not excel in obedience so "vaccination" in this manner is not possible.

It's not the germs, viruses, bacteria or fungus that's the problem. It's the underlying susceptibility to these organisms. My cats are healthy and my kittens are healthier with every successive generation. Even if they do get sick they recover with supportive care. This doesn't mean I do not sometimes lose kittens, I do and all breeders do. I much prefer to take the risk of them getting sick than to use drugs and vaccinations to prevent disease.

Vaccination is supposed to increase antibody levels against a specific disease that in turn will prevent the animal from catching that particular disease. A vaccine tricks the body into thinking it has been exposed to the disease without actually becoming ill.

As I stated above, presence of antibodies does not necessarily equate to immunity to a disease. The immune system has two separate means of detecting and destroying disease that ideally work in a cooperative way, but given the rise of autoimmune diseases in cats today (such as cancer), sometimes in an antagonistic way.

One part of the system is the humoral immune system that produces antibodies in the blood. The other part is the cellular or cell-mediated immune system that primarily works against foreign antigens in the body through the activity of its cells found in the thymus, adenoids, spleen, lymph nodes and lymph system. The work of the cellular immune system is known as "the acute inflammatory response" and is often accompanied by the normal signs of inflammation: fever, malaise and discharge of mucus, pus, skin rash or diarrhea.

If a cat is excessively vaccinated as most cats are, this could lead to over stimulation of the humoral part of immune system and lack of stimulation of the cellular portion. Coupled with vaccination is the excessive use of conventional medicine like antibiotics, steroids and many other drugs that are designed to suppress inflammatory symptoms. Not many breeders or caregivers will allow their cats or kittens to express inflammatory conditions without resorting to drugs that make the symptoms go away. When vaccinating, a disease agent (or antigen) is introduced into the body without causing the disease. If the vaccine provoked both the humoral and cellular immune systems, it would cause symptoms of the disease. That would certainly put a stop to most vaccinations! Can you imagine the symptoms of disease if the conventional feline three-in-one vaccine caused the symptoms of all three diseases? No one would ever vaccinate again!

The symptoms of disease are the acute inflammatory symptoms, something no one wants to see in their kittens and cats. A vaccine works by excessively stimulating the antibody production and stimulating very little or not at all the cellular immune system.

Given the above, you may see why vaccines really do not improve the immune system; they agitate one portion of it (antibody production) and suppress the other. This practice is not preventing disease, it is instead suppressing the ability of the immune system to respond to and overcome the disease. Add into this equation the use of suppressive medicine and you have a very compromised immune system.

What vaccinations do is prevent the cat from expressing symptoms of a particular illness and modify the reaction of the immune system, decreasing acute response and increasing the tendency for chronic allergies and autoimmune disease. Vaccines do not make your cat healthier — good food, healthy environment and proper breeding practices do.

One of the major problems with vaccination is that the viruses (most vaccines given to cats are combinations of multiple viruses) are injected directly into the bloodstream, completely bypassing the body's normal defense mechanisms. A two-pound kitten gets exactly the same dose as a 12-pound adult. There is no accounting for the differences in weight, age, sex, breed, health status or susceptibility.

The most common feline vaccine combination, called a "three-in-one" contains feline viral rhinotracheitis ("rhino") also known as feline herpesvirus, feline calicivirus ("calici") and feline panleukopenia ("panleukopenia") is commonly referred to as FVRCP. Rhino and calici are both upper respiratory infections ("URIs"). Panleukopenia, also called feline distemper, is a disease similar to canine parvovirus, which causes severe vomiting and diarrhea.

The panleukopenia vaccine became first available in 1970. Up until the past five years or so, most companion cats were vaccinated at least for panleukopenia, rhino, calici and rabies annually.

I am aware of the potential of a panleukopenia outbreak in my cattery, but the risk is extremely minimal. I do not regularly rescue cats or bring unknown cats in contact with my cats and kittens. Even though they go outside, I am not seeing feral cats dropping dead from panleukopenia on my property. My cats rarely step foot inside a veterinary office, so there's little risk of exposure in that manner.

Young kittens and old cats are more susceptible to panleukopenia. I keep my kittens with me until they are at least four months old and I do all I can to build their health from within, naturally. It makes more sense to me to build the health of my cats so that should they be exposed to panleukopenia (or any other disease) they might be able to recover. I see no sense in using vaccination as a means to prevent panleukopenia given the way I raise my cats.

Whenever I tell anyone I do not vaccinate for panleukopenia I get reminded of a certain breeder who did not vaccinate for panleukopenia and had an outbreak in her cattery. She lost a number of cats, some of them vaccinated. Our catteries are very different and I do not think I'm in any danger of having a similar outbreak. I realize I am taking a slight risk by not vaccinating my cats for panleukopenia, however, I am prepared for the remote chance my kittens and cats may someday become sick.

Acute diseases tend to run their course and then die out. Pro-vaccination people would have you believe it is because of vaccination that these diseases are no longer a problem. I do not think this is the case. Vaccination for URIs has not wiped out URIs in cats. They still get them, vaccinated or not. Strong kittens survive and become immune to the virus, weak kittens die. There was a time when panleukopenia killed a lot of cats. Because it is an acute disease, panleukopenia strikes hard and fast. The cat survives or it does not. In the natural order of things, the cats that survive an epidemic go on to reproduce. The immune system of each cat exposed to the natural disease had the opportunity to work cooperatively. The cellular immune system expressed itself in the vomiting and diarrhea while the humoral immune system produced antibodies. This is how an immune system is strengthened, not by vaccination.

The cats that survive an epidemic breed and produce healthy offspring. This line of cats may go on reproducing for years and then, be it due to inbreeding, insufficient food sources or shelter, another epidemic may strike and take its toll. It's cruel, but this is how nature culls unhealthy individuals and keeps a population in check. Granted, cats surviving in the wild have little in the way of supportive care available and have far less chance of surviving than a cat under the care of a human — especially if that human is versed in using homeopathy. In the face of a violent acute disease like panleukopenia, homeopathy truly shines. The symptoms are simple and clear. They are not hidden under layers of symptoms like chronic disease.

There are two different kinds of disease: acute — those that attack suddenly and often violently; and chronic — those that come on slow and insidious, beginning with mild symptoms (which are often suppressed with conventional medicine) which progress to deadly conditions.

Today veterinarians rarely see a case of panleukopenia. Would panleukopenia have run its natural course without a vaccine being developed? If the panleukopenia vaccine were not developed, would all domestic cats have been killed? I doubt it. Cats have survived for too long to be wiped out by a virus. The unhealthy cats would have died, but would the surviving cats have been so healthy that the cats today would fewer health problems than they do?

Veterinarians do see many cases of cats with vague vomiting and diarrhea symptoms that they may initially diagnose as a food allergy. If a prescription diet does not cure the symptoms (which frequently it does not), then more tests will be run and the cat may be diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease ("IBD"). Then the cat will be put on anti-diarrhea or anti-vomiting medicine and steroids to make the vomiting and diarrhea go away. This may work for a while, but these drugs ultimately take their toll. The cat has vomiting and diarrhea symptoms for a reason and simply making them go away using drugs is not the answer.

Look at the symptoms of the acute form of panleukopenia compared to symptoms the veterinarians commonly see in cats today:

Acute Form of Feline Panleukopenia

Chronic/New Acute

Lassitude; indifference to owner or surroundings.

Lazy cats, not active, lie around most of the time.
Inappetance.

Appetite problems, finicky, not wanting to eat well.
Fever.

Chronic fever, for weeks, with few symptoms except for cervical gland enlargements.
Rough, unkempt coat.

Poor groomers (or cats that never groom).
Dehydration.

Chronic dehydration leading to cystitis and bladder calculus formation; chronic interstitial nephritis.
Rapid weight loss.

Emaciation; thin, "skeletal" cats. Hyperthyroidism.
Vomiting; profuse, watery, diarrhea (often blood-tinged).

Inflammatory bowel disease.
Mucopurulent discharges from the eyes and nose.

Chronic upper respiratory infections; sinusitis.

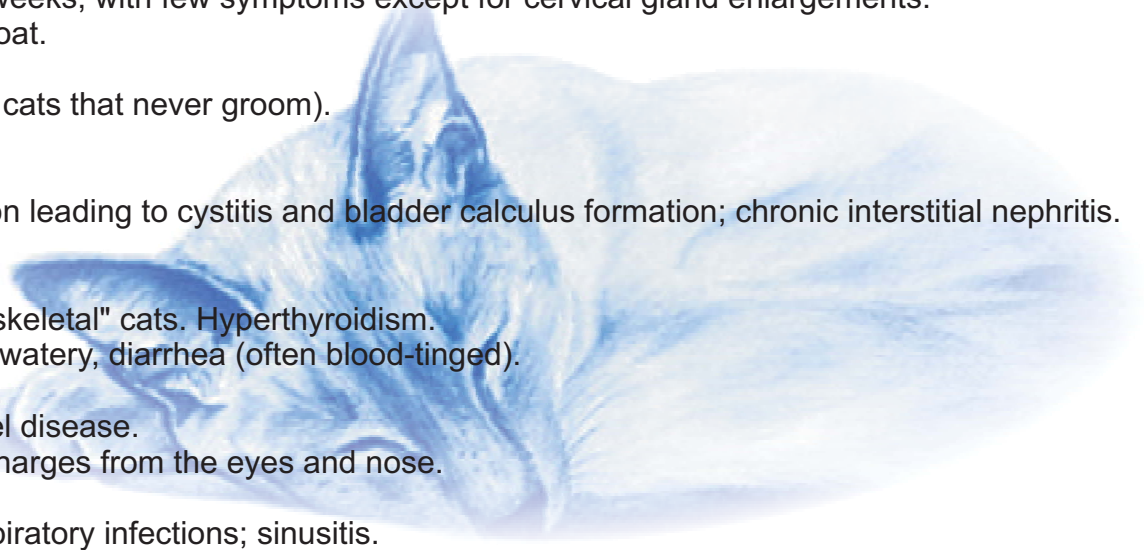


Chart from "A New Look at the Vaccine Question" by Richard H. Pitcairn, D.V.M., Ph.D., Animal Natural Health Center, Eugene Oregon

Can you see the similarities? Have we traded an acute disease (panleukopenia) for chronic disease? Is this an acceptable trade-off? Which is worst on the cat, a sudden acute disease which, given proper care he may recover from, or long-term suffering from a disease which he may never truly recover from? Cats may not be dying from panleukopenia, but they surely do die from IBD, hyperthyroidism, kidney disease and cancer all the time.

Feline vaccines are commonly grown in Crandall-Reese Feline Kidney ("CRFK") cells. As a consequence, feline vaccines contain CRFK proteins. A study conducted by Colorado State University showed that only one injection of the common feline three-in-one vaccination (FVRCP) led to production of anti-kidney antibodies. This study indicates that vaccination could be a cause for chronic renal failure in cats.¹

Because giardia, a microscopic parasite, is very difficult to cure, the giardia vaccine (originally developed for

dogs) is the new rage among cat breeders. A study conducted again by the Colorado State University indicated that the giardia vaccine had no impact on a group of cats infected with the parasite. The researcher thought perhaps if the vaccine were used on cats that were naturally infected with giardia, it might be more effective.²

Bordetella, a respiratory disease also known as kennel cough is caused by Bordetella bronchiseptica ("B. bronchiseptica") (a bacillus), is a disease common in dogs, especially those in a kennel or shelter environment. Studies have concluded that although B. bronchiseptica can cause respiratory infection in cats, it is highly likely that other factors are involved including stress and concurrent infection with other respiratory viruses.³ B. bronchiseptica is usually carried by cats asymptotically.⁴ Cats who are vaccinated against rhino and calici are now succumbing to a new respiratory virus, Bordetella, which they are now getting vaccinated for. Does this make any sense? Does it look like cats are getting healthier due to current vaccination protocols? It looks to me like they are becoming susceptible to bacteria normally resident in their own systems.

A new vaccine for FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) was announced in March 2002. The problem with this vaccine is that cats vaccinated with it test positive for the virus. Some people seem to think that's only a problem if your cat gets lost and ends up in a shelter, is tested for FIV, tests positive and is euthanized. FIV infects only 2% of "at risk" cats in the United States! At risk cats are feral cats, not your regular household companion or cats in a cattery! Why in the world does anyone think it is necessary to develop a vaccine for a disease that strikes very few cats in the United States? Because they can and for as long as there are diseases, imagined or real, vaccine manufacturers will continue to make vaccines.

I have been following an interesting discussion on one of the conventional cat lists about Feline Infectious Peritonitis ("FIP"), a deadly disease associated with feline coronavirus. The common benign form of feline coronavirus is referred to as FECV (feline enteric coronavirus) and is not a problem for most cats who will remain healthy when exposed, but coronavirus are prone to mutation. It is the mutated form of FECV that causes FIP.

FECV is spread primarily by the fecal-oral route and, to a lesser degree, through saliva or respiratory droplets. While cats at a show will usually not come in contact with the litter boxes of other cats, at the end of a cat show, while packing up to head home, exhibitors dump their litter boxes into trash receptacles throughout the show hall. The dust from the cat litter could contain FECV, float through the air and land on your cat. During his normal grooming, the cat could contract FECV. If it happens to be the mutated form of FECV, your cat could become ill with FIP.

One interesting thing about FIP, a disease that is baffling veterinarians, vaccine manufacturers and breeders is that the feline coronavirus operates differently from any other feline virus in several important ways: a) systemic antibodies have no protective function for the cat and may play a role in the disease FIP itself b) antibody titers are meaningless for diagnosis of FIP or prognosis.⁵ Could FIP, a relatively new disease, have made an appearance because vaccinates have been over-stimulating antibody production, hence a disease appears that antibodies cannot protect against or has the cellular immune system of cats become so suppressed that it no longer works properly?

Susan Little, in her paper, Feline Infectious Peritonitis — updated information for breeders, suggests breeders select for overall disease resistance. How can breeders select for disease resistance if they do not allow their cats to get sick because they vaccinate for every disease they could possibly get (except, of course for FIP, because there is no effective vaccination). Dr. Little believes the likely defect in immunity to FIP is in cell-mediated immunity and cats that are susceptible to FIP are also likely susceptible to some other infections as well, especially fungal and viral infections. Given what I read on the conventional cat lists, there are a lot of cats susceptible to fungal and viral infections. Ringworm (a fungal infection) is a significant problem in many catteries.

There are very few breeders who have been breeding for any length of time who have not experienced FIP in

their cattery. I borrowed a male from a cattery in the mid-West. When he came to me, I knew he wasn't right, but I attributed his condition to years of living in a cage and eating commercial food. First he developed severe upper respiratory symptoms. Not long after that, I found him in my closet collapsed with a hard swollen belly. I brought him to a veterinarian who performed the various tests they do for FIP. He had a coronavirus titer of 1:800. Given that he had the classic symptoms of FIP and a high titer, his breeder requested that he be put to sleep. This cat had been running loose with my cats and had bred one of my queens. She did not become pregnant from this breeding, which is probably a good thing. This happened well over five years ago. My cats and kittens have not shown any symptoms of FIP.

A very real danger of feline vaccination are Vaccine Associated Sarcomas ("VAS"). VAS is a cancer usually called Fibrosarcoma which is believed to occur as a result of vaccines. Conventional veterinarian's solution to VAS is not to administer vaccines between the shoulder blades, but to give them in parts of the body like the rear legs that could be easily amputated if VAS occurs. That's very enlightened thinking if I do say so myself.

I predict in the very near future there will be as many vaccines used on cats as there are on dogs. Some puppies are vaccinated with seven-in-one vaccines!! Seven different viruses (Distemper, Infectious Canine Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Canine Adenovirus Type 2, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza, and Coronavirus) injected into a puppy that is not even two months old. How crazy can that be?

I understand why people vaccinate and I certainly do not think they are bad people because they vaccinate. I wish more people would stop and really think about health and disease. Then, maybe, they would consider a different approach.

It takes a lot of work to build and maintain a truly healthy cat. Vaccination, as a preventative, is a short-cut and does not take into account the whole picture. Even vaccinated cats can succumb to the diseases they were vaccinated against. Not so much with panleukopenia as that is one of the more effective vaccines, but you'll be surprised to know how ineffective many of the other vaccines are.

Back to the vaccines contained in the three-in-one vaccine: both Rhino and Calici are upper respiratory viruses. The vaccine does not necessarily prevent either virus. It may lessen the severity of the virus, but it may not prevent it.

I have seen vaccinated cats and kittens suffer from far worse URIs than my unvaccinated cats and kittens. I can't see vaccination as a means of preventing or lessening the symptoms of URIs. I believe kittens, like children need to get sick before maturing into adulthood. A kitten catching a URI and then recovering will have natural immunity to URIs and will have the beginnings of a competent immune system. This is so important, especially given the types of diseases that are becoming common in cats today.

All the vaccines in the world are not preventing the progression of Amoxicillin (a relatively mild antibiotic) use to the current use of Baytril and Zithromax (both very aggressive antibiotics) to treat URIs. If vaccines were indeed working — then why are more aggressive antibiotics needed to nurse kittens (and cats) through URIs? These poor cats often spend weeks and even months on antibiotics. Can this be doing them any good? The recent increase of older kittens and young adults with IBD may very well be related to excessive antibiotic use in kittens. URIs are viral in nature. Antibiotics are of no use in viral infections. Antibiotics are given to prevent secondary bacterial infection.

Conventional medicine is misdirected in its approach to preventing disease. It makes more sense to me to prevent disease by feeding a high quality (preferably raw meat) diet, common-sense sanitation, reducing the number of cats housed together and providing plenty of fresh air, sunshine and exercise opportunities. Housing a bunch of cats in a basement or garage with little or no natural light or fresh air is not conducive to good health.

Kittens can and do die from URIs, but given good supportive care, a healthy kitten should survive. I have found they are more inclined to recover completely if antibiotics are not used. A kitten with a URI can be difficult to deal with. Like anyone with a cold, they can get cranky. Sometimes it seems like it takes forever to get them through their URI symptoms — but once you do it — without suppressive medicine — they are all the better for it.

There are those people who believe if a cat survives a URI it then may become a "carrier." The philosophy is that a carrier cat that will continue to infect cats with URI and if stressed break with URI symptoms himself. I do not buy that belief. If that were the case just about every cat in my household would be breaking with URI and infecting everyone else. If moving 1,000 miles from a home many of them had lived in for five years to arrive at a strange house that was itself a cattery (with its own sick cats and kittens) and a grooming shop (many of my cats had never seen a dog before) to stay for two months and then move to another home is not stress to the max, I do not know what stress is. Two of my cats (Olie and Tippy) got mild eye infections that may have been due to URI or may have been nothing more than debris in their eyes causing irritation. I also had to have one young kitten put to sleep because she had a badly infected eye. The remainder of my cats did not miss a beat.

I believe it is the vaccine manufacturers who invented the carrier definition as a means to sell their product. In thinking about vaccination, maybe vaccinated cats do not appear to be carriers. Since a vaccine stimulates antibodies and suppresses the acute inflammatory symptoms of the disease, a vaccinated cat may never express URI symptoms and infect other cats.

I have found in the years I've been treating URIs in kittens with homeopathy that it may take longer for the symptoms to go away and the kitten may relapse, but the relapse is usually less severe. With antibiotics, the URI symptoms often disappear almost immediately, but once the antibiotic is finished, they come back just as severe as they were originally. Caregivers want the symptoms to go away quickly, therefore, they may love antibiotics, but they usually do not offer a complete cure. When the symptoms come back, the kitten is often put on a different antibiotic. There is not much else a conventional veterinarian can offer for treatment of a URI. With homeopathy there are upwards of twenty, thirty, maybe more, different remedies for treatment of URI symptoms.

Even if the antibiotic is doing what it is supposed to do — kill bacteria, it is not necessarily improving the health of the kitten, it is killing the bacteria that may be making the kitten sick. It is also killing healthy bacteria in the kitten's system. If the kitten is exposed to the same type of bacteria later on in life, will he be able to remain healthy? Probably not because his immune system did not work against the bacteria the first time around, the antibiotic did.

These antibiotics are not curing the kitten, they are not helping to build the kitten's immune system, they are killing the healthy bacteria and the kitten eventually starts to run from you because he's sick of having nasty tasting medicine shoved down his throat. I love homeopathy for that reason. Usually a remedy is administered once and unless the kitten does not recover with the first dose, you do not give it again. If given dry, the pellets are tiny and have little taste. I usually recommend that they be administered in water so all you're giving the kitten is a bit of water.

Nasty tasting medicine is never administered to Blakkatz kittens and cats.

I'm not sure why kittens and cats seem to improve while taking antibiotics. Maybe, in the case of URIs, they have some antihistamine effect. Maybe the antibiotic action sets up some secondary disease state that temporarily offsets the URI symptoms. Once the antibiotic is ceased, the URI disease state (with its symptoms) returns.

A final note on kittens and URIs: given supportive care — namely nourishing food, a warm bed, force feeding liquid food, if necessary, and keeping the nasal passages and eyes open and clear of dried mucus, the kitten should survive. If not, then in my opinion, the kitten is weak and should be allowed to pass on to his next life. I am not a fan of using heroic methods to pull a kitten through a URI. Survival of the fittest is an important rule and practiced by too few breeders. A kitten nursed through a URI with every drug known to veterinarians does not make for a healthy adult. The unfortunate truth is that it is almost always the pick kitten in the litter that gets the most sick. I don't know why that is. Nature seems to pick the ugliest kittens to be the healthiest. These coddled babies often go on to become part of a breeding program. This does not make for healthy offspring — especially if this kitten ends up getting vaccinated again and again on top of all the drug therapy used to "save" him from a URI.

Most kittens in a multi-cat environment will succumb to at least one URI. If they catch a URI and survive are they not immune to the virus? The catch-22 here is that most kittens are not allowed to recover without use of suppressive medicine so maybe they never become truly immune to the virus. In addition, many breeders will have 10 or 20 kittens on the ground at one time. No one wants to nurse that many kittens through URIs.

You can bet a kitten coming from Blakkatz will have had at least one URI episode and that the kitten was treated using homeopathy or was simply supported through his illness. I do not shield my kittens from URIs or anything else for that matter. If one kitten in the litter starts exhibiting symptoms of URI, I do not segregate him — heck no! I let him infect the whole lot of them. I do not keep kittens separate from the other cats in the household either. I know most breeders keep their kittens in a room apart from all the other cats except their mother until they receive their first shots. Some breeders even wean the kittens and pull the mother away for fear of infection from the mother. If the mother is so unhealthy, why then is she in a breeding program? Some breeders literally raise their kittens "under glass" and do not even allow potential buyers to handle them. What do they think they are raising — hot house flowers? Kittens-in-a-bubble? They count on vaccination to "prepare" them for the world of disease. In my opinion, that is very poor preparation.

How anyone can think it necessary or desirable to inject an eight week old (or even younger) kitten with three (and sometimes more) viruses at once and then do it again in two or three weeks and then again! That poor kitten's immune system must get so confused. There is no way a kitten would ever be exposed to rhino, calici and panleukopenia all at the same time. How can an immature immune system handle this onslaught? Some breeders actually vaccinate kittens before they even open their eyes and they vaccinate pregnant queens. This is absolute craziness!

An eight-week-old kitten is just beginning to wean, which is very stressful for the kitten. They are also teething. Their immune systems are weaning off maternal immunity and developing on their own. How can it be advantageous to vaccinate a kitten going through so much stress with several different disease-causing agents and stimulate more antibody production? Many breeders will vaccinate a kitten right before he goes to his new home. That is a dangerous practice. Uprooting a kitten from an environment he was born into and thrusting him into a completely new situation with strangers is a very frightening experience for many kittens. Adding the additional stress of vaccination into the mixture is a recipe for potential disaster.

I know these breeders think they are doing the best thing for their cats and kittens, but it is not an approach I care to take. I want my kittens exposed to normal germs, bacteria and viruses while they are in my care so I can nurse them through any illnesses my way. My way is not the easiest way by any means, which is why most breeders will not do it. It is why I keep my breeding program small and breed only a few litters a year.

Although I do not recommend it, nor think it is necessary, my kitten sale contract allows for vaccination of the kitten, ONCE, with a conventional three-in-one vaccine. I know many veterinarians will not spay or neuter a cat without some shot records. My contract also allows for rabies vaccination, as required by law, but a rabies vaccination is not to be given on the same day as a three-in-one vaccination. Should the caregiver desire to boost the three-in-one vaccination when the kitten is one year old, that is permitted under my contract, but not recommended. Continuing to vaccinate the cat on an annual basis or with any other vaccine such as feline leukemia, feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), chlamydia, ringworm, bordetella or any other newly developed vaccine will invalidate my health guaranty and make me come after you with a club! No vaccine should ever be given on the same day as or within thirty days of any surgery, nor should a vaccine be administered to an unhealthy cat, no matter how minor the illness.

As far as I'm concerned, once you get a four-month-old kitten from Blakkatz, there will be no need to vaccinate the kitten for anything other than rabies, if required by law.

I know vaccination is not necessary to raise a healthy cat. I have raised generations of vibrantly healthy cats without vaccination, except for what is required by law.

Cats are cats. They thrive on a minimally processed, properly balanced raw meat diet. Homeopathy is a wonderful healing method to treat any illness because it is noninvasive, has no side effects (if used properly) and offers a cure. Cats hate to be messed with! They hate to be restrained and have medicine forcibly shoved down their throat, in their eyes or nose. They hate to be transported to a veterinarian's office with all its strange smells and noises. My approach to cat care is simple, but effective. It takes into account a cat's particular needs and desires.

Vaccination does bring in a substantial income for veterinarians. The new protocol of vaccination every three years has to be taking a financial toll on many veterinarians. I am sorry for that, but it's time the truth was told.

Nosodes

Nosodes are often referred to as "homeopathic vaccination" or suggested as a safe alternative to conventional vaccination. There is nothing homeopathic about vaccination and nosodes are not necessarily harmless. The only alternative to vaccination is to build the health of your cat via a raw diet, a healthy and clean environment and avoidance of most conventional medicine

Hahnemann did not use nosodes; it was Hering who performed the first proving of a nosode. The homeopaths, Boenninghausen and Wolf were the first to suggest use of homeopathic remedies as alternatives to vaccination. A nosode is a homeopathic remedy made from diseased tissue, blood, saliva or the like. For example, Variolinum is the contents of the ripened pustule of smallpox. Homeoprophylaxis is a term used to describe the use of homeopathic remedies to prevent disease. In aphorism 73, note 73b, Hahnemann discusses the use of Belladonna for prevention and treatment of smooth scarlet fever and Aconite for pupura miliaris (Roodvok).

When working with a number of different individuals suffering from the same acute disease, it is possible to narrow down remedies that have both curative and preventative (prophylactic) powers. These remedies are not chosen because of the name of the disease, but rather, the totality of the symptoms of all of the individuals sick with the disease during the outbreak.

For example, if you have a litter of kittens all sick with an upper respiratory infection, list the symptoms expressed by each kitten and then make a list of the common symptoms for all of the kittens. This should enable the choice of a few different remedies that should be useful in curing the kittens. This is especially useful in treating young kittens who do not yet have defined personalities. Don't forget to take temperatures. Whether or not the kitten has a fever and how high it is makes a big difference in choosing the right remedy. Should a subsequent litter of kittens in your cattery or shelter get sick with a URI with similar symptoms, the same set of remedies may offer a cure or be a preventative.

Maybe it's because I've never had a large number of kittens at the same time, but I have not found this method of prescribing, called "remedy epidemicus" useful. I still work with each kitten on an individual basis.

With cats and kittens, I am not sure homeoprophylaxis is of any use. There are many different strains of URI and each litter is going to express different symptoms. Given healthy kittens, URIs should be able to be dealt with using homeopathy in the normal manner. I would not be desirous of preventing URIs in my kittens because I believe these minor illnesses are part of what builds a competent immune system.

There are URI nosodes available, but since most cats and kittens I've treated for URI all express different symptoms, I cannot see a standard URI nosode being of any use for the general population.

Throughout history, nosodes have been used successfully to prevent and treat deadly diseases in humans such as small pox, TB, whooping cough, typhoid and meningitis. The time to use nosodes is if there is a clear and present danger of epidemic and there is no way during the epidemic that every person (or cat) could be treated as an individual. This brings to light my rule about the number of cats one keeps in a household (cattery or shelter). If all of the cats in the household got sick all at the same time — could you comfortably care for them all? If not, then you have too many cats.

The only feline disease I see any reason to possibly use a nosode for is panleukopenia, and then only if, for example, a cat in your household became ill with panleukopenia. Even then, I believe I would resort to regular homeopathic remedies such as Arsenicum Album or Phosphorus to treat the cats instead of the nosode. To my knowledge, the feline panleukopenia nosode has not been proven; therefore, its range of action is not known. Both Ars and Phos are well proven remedies and are surely indicated for panleukopenia symptoms.

I have seen advertised on the Internet feline combo-nosodes. Now that's going too far into the realm of allopathic medicine. If a single nosode is not well proven, combo nosodes are not at all. As is the case with combination homeopathic remedies, this is not good practice. If you are going to use a nosode, use a single disease nosode at a time.

Using any homeopathic remedy in an allopathic manner, in place of vaccination because of fear of the cat getting sick is not the best use of homeopathy. Administering nosodes to a kitten every week (or bi-weekly, I've seen many different schedules for administering nosodes) can interfere with constitutional treatment of the kitten. Constitutional treatment takes into account the kitten's previous medical history (if any), temperament, energy level, likes and dislikes, temperature and food preferences, tolerance to weather changes and so on. It is a general all-over remedy that best suits that kitten as an individual. By the time the kitten reaches 8 weeks old (which is when vaccination typically begins), you can derive a relatively clear symptom picture of the kitten and prescribe constitutionally.

Constitutional treatment, proper diet (raw!), and a healthy and clean environment are the very best protection against disease. If you only have a few kittens or cats, there is absolutely no reason to use nosodes to prevent disease.

Nosodes should not be given unless your cat is under the care of a competent classical homeopath. Over-medication with nosodes or giving nosodes to a sensitive individual could produce a "remedy disease" which will be far worse than the natural disease because your cat may never recover. A remedy disease is similar to vaccinosis (a vaccine-induced disease) — both conditions are very difficult to cure. Some cats are going to be more susceptible to particular nosodes, therefore, it is important that a very small dose be given initially and the cat carefully observed for any symptoms. This is not something a caregiver unfamiliar with homeopathy should take on.

Finally, while we are on the topic of vaccinations and homeopathic remedies, it is often suggested to give the homeopathic remedy, Thuja after a conventional vaccination or the remedy, Lyssin after a rabies vaccination. The reason for this is to counteract any vaccination side effects. Thuja is just one of many vaccinosis remedies. Lyssin is made from the saliva of a rabid dog. Giving homeopathic remedies in this manner is poor practice. You should never give a homeopathic remedy just because or just in case. If your cat has a vaccination reaction, you treat it then according to the symptoms. You may find that Thuja is not indicated at all. Silicea, for example, is another common vaccinosis remedy, one I've numerous times in my cats. The best way to avoid vaccination side effects is to not vaccinate.

I have a whole series of feline and canine nosodes in my stash of homeopathic remedies. I have not used any of them. I realize the risk I am taking by not vaccinating my cats. I believe it is a very small risk. I treat my cats homeopathically on an individual basis and do everything possible to keep their lives as healthy as possible. So far, I have not regretted not vaccinating my cats.

For further reading on vaccination see a wonderful analogy of homeopathy and vaccination Chris Kurz, Ph.D

Walter Ulrich has Fun with Vaccines

The Interrelationship of Vaccinations, Vital Force and Remedy Action by Larry A. Bernstein, V.M.D.

Information on Vaccination from Dr Charles E Loops DVM

For further reading off my page see:

The Vaccination Controversy

A Holistic Approach to Veterinary Vaccination by Dr. Clare Middle BVMS, Dip Hom, Dip Ac.

Veterinarians Question Vaccination Procedures. Vaccinations can have adverse effects, studies show. By Rhonda L. Rundle. THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

This is a page with many different articles on vaccination.

Canine Vaccine Survey by Canine Health Concern, England

The Immune System and Disease Resistance. By W. Jean Dodds, DVM

Shirley's Wellness Cafe has a tremendous amount of information on the dangers of vaccination.

Sylvia's Journey of New Hope: Information on Vaccine Associated Sarcomas.

