

Over-Vaccination Alert: Protect Your Pet From Your Vet?

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DENVER, Nov. 14 /PRNewswire/ -- Millions of dogs and cats may face the risk of deadly immune system disorders, cancer and other serious side effects, because veterinarians profit from often unnecessary annual rabies shots.

Jim Schwartz of suburban Denver, CO, and founder of Next-To-Kin Foundation (see www.next2kin.org), concluded this only after his beloved standard poodle, Moolah, developed autoimmune disease shortly after receiving an annual rabies vaccination. Moolah had to be euthanized.

Upon extensively researching the situation, Schwartz learned of a United Kingdom study showing that 1-in-10 dogs and cats suffer side effects from rabies vaccinations. The commonly stated side-effect rate of 1-in-10,000, Schwartz further learned, is self-reported, on a voluntary basis, by the veterinarians themselves.

Mr. Schwartz learned another disturbing consequence: most small-pet veterinarian practices have a vested pecuniary interest in under-reporting side-effect incidents.

A highly successful fee-only financial planner before early-retirement, James D. Schwartz decided to follow the numbers: A rabies dose costs the veterinarian about 61 cents. The vet may charge as much as \$38 to administer the shot plus another \$35 for the office visit - a total mark-up of 11,000%+. Using the profession's own statistics, the financial planner determined that many veterinary practices would not be profitable without annual rabies shots.

"The fact is that for many small-pet dominant veterinary practices, the shots are critical to their economic wherewithal," says Schwartz. "In this era of financial manipulation by Enron, WorldCom and Arthur Andersen, could we now add veterinarians? Who can you trust? In fact even veterinarians have begun to question the necessity and ethics of this practice."

One veterinarian in Texas has filed a complaint with the Attorney General of Texas and the Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners against his colleagues for their over-vaccination practices.

"Every year the people of Texas spend \$360 million on unnecessary and potentially harmful vaccinations for their pets," writes Dr. Bob Rogers of Spring, TX. "Charging for vaccines that have no benefit and are potentially harmful is theft by deception and cruelty to animals."

Schwartz has taken action of his own by incorporating the tax exempt Next-To-Kin(SM) Foundation to advocate for dogs, cats and their owners. Next-To-Kin's mission is to extend and enhance the quality of life of traditional companion animals by preventing unnecessary death, illness and suffering. In addition to eliminating over-vaccination, the foundation seeks to be a voice in support of legal efforts to recognize that dogs and cats have value beyond that of mere property.

"Dogs and cats have moved from the backyard to the bedroom," says Schwartz, explaining that companion animals have become increasingly important to their humans; their value exceeds that of mere property.

Next-To-Kin is providing people who become members of the foundation with a Vaccination Alert Consent Form. The form documents that the veterinarian has discussed vaccination issues -- such as shot frequency, benefits and risks -- and appropriate alternatives with the owner.

"This form empowers guardians to take charge of their companion-animal's well-being," says Schwartz. "Next-To-Kin is trying to encourage that kind of dialog between guardians and vets."

For information on the Next-To-Kin Foundation, its mission and over-vaccination issues, visit the foundation's website, www.next2kin.org; call (303) 850-9166; e-mail info@next2kin.org; or write to Next-To-Kin Foundation, 8547 East Arapahoe Road, J197, Greenwood Village, CO 80112-1430.

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