

Dog Owners Should Vaccinate with Caution: Beware of Vaccinosis

by **Jack D. Cichy**

Zack, our eight year old Miniature Schnauzer 'won' a local audition for the Canadian Superdogs Show that appeared at our local entertainment arena several years ago here in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Superdogs judge was impressed with Zack's repertoire of tricks and called him "Shirley Temple on four legs." Zack had such a zest for life and play. His mother and father were both champion show dogs. Zack's health was soon to change, for the worse!

We had a feeling that the ongoing vaccination of our dog was not a good idea after his previous vaccine reactions. Zack's reaction to the Leptospirosis vaccine in June of 2001 resulted in him spending several days in intensive care due to a vaccinosis reaction. We almost lost him. Zack had another vaccine reaction in 2000 (Distemper) as he was unable to breathe properly so Benadryl was administered.

On March 19th, 2004, Zack passed his physical exam with flying colors. A titer blood test was administered to determine the level of rabies vaccine antibodies in Zack's system. Zack's antibodies were not adequate. I asked the vet if we should be concerned about administering the rabies vaccination given Zack's previous vaccine reactions. My veterinarian told me not to worry, 'the rabies vaccine is the safest vaccine administered to dogs' he said. Bear in mind, a DVM may write a vaccine exemption letter if s/he determines that a vaccine will endanger an animal's health.

Three days after Zack's rabies vaccination, he became very tired & was having difficulty using his back legs. I called my veterinarian to report Zack's condition. Seven days after Zack's vaccination, his hind legs (where he received the rabies vaccination injection) started to become very weak. Upon examination, it was determined that Zack did not have ligament, muscle, or arthritis problems as my veterinarian had suspected. Even so, Rimadyl, an anti-inflammatory used for arthritis was prescribed. Rimadyl provided no help to Zack and was discontinued in short order. No other treatment protocol was discussed or recommended by my veterinarian.

On the evening of 4-4-04 I called my veterinarian's after hours emergency line to report Zack's worsening condition with his fever and hind legs muscle weakness. The attending DVM told me that there was nothing that could immediately be done for Zack given his symptoms.

I took matters into my own hands the next morning and conducted an internet search. I discovered a DVM autoimmune expert by the name of Dr. W. Jean Dodds of Santa Monica, California. Her work is widely published on the World Wide Web. She told me that Zack was suffering from a classic vaccinosis (i.e..., fever, muscle aches, bone pain, prostration, malaise, etc.,) autoimmune response to the rabies vaccine. She pointed out that the ideal detoxification treatment for Zack's rabies reaction could not be effectively administered, as a short window of opportunity to administer a detoxification program had been missed.

Guided by Dr. Dodds, I secured the services of a local Holistic DVM. After examining Zack, my holistic veterinarian confirmed that he was suffering from a reaction to the rabies vaccine. Zack's

condition continued to deteriorate over several weeks of holistic treatment to the point where he could not use his hind legs and stand on his own. We faced the dilemma of 'putting him down' or taking him to another traditional veterinarian for treatment.

We hired a new traditional (classical) DVM on April 20, after Zack's holistic care did not produce any immediate positive results. We insisted that she consult with Dr. Dodds on Zack's condition. After doing so, we started treating Zack with daily doses of a steroid called prednisolone so that he may walk. Doubting the autoimmune vaccinosis response, my new local traditional veterinarian recommended another anti-inflammatory drug (Deramaxx) for Zack. Deramaxx is approved for relieving pain in dogs. Our new veterinarian felt Zack's symptoms were related either to a spine condition or to arthritis. We reluctantly went along with her supposition and gave Zack the Deramaxx. The drug did not help Zack one bit and his condition quickly deteriorated. We resumed steroid treatment (prednisolone) in short order.

Our new classical veterinarian encouraged us to have a myelogram performed on Zack to ascertain the extent of his back problems. We avoided a myelogram, as we were concerned about seizures that can occur during this procedure due to the dye contrast material that is injected into the animal's spine. Plus, we did not want to risk back surgery, as it is often unpredictable.

Various tests (xrays, blood-work) have been conducted on Zack to determine the cause of his symptoms. No definitive diagnosis had been suggested. We took Zack to Michigan State University's Small Animal Hospital on August 4, 2004 for an extensive examination. No definitive diagnosis was offered regarding Zack's condition. He continued to be tired, and have stiffness in his hind legs upon arising from periods of rest. He did not care to climb steps.

Very few classically trained veterinarians seemed to understand the underlying reason for Zack's symptoms after his rabies vaccination. In my experience, most traditional veterinarians are trained in how to vaccinate pets, but they are woefully uneducated as to how to deal with autoimmune vaccinosis.

What we have learned from Zack's health ordeal is to question every vaccination given to our dog and to always titer test for antibodies before vaccinations are given. We have also learned that if a dog has a reaction to one vaccination, s/he may have more severe reactions to later vaccinations.

We are amazed at the relative lack of understanding in the traditional classically trained veterinary medicine community as to the role that autoimmune provoked vaccinosis can play in creating chronic health problems in dogs. What makes this idea so bizarre is that the internet is saturated with DVM discussions on the issue of vaccinosis and how to deal with it.

We have tried holistic acupuncture and chiropractic treatments for Zack in the past by a local DVM in an attempt to improve upon his quality of life. There has been no sustained relief for Zack's "back problem."

On January third, 2005, Zack's prednisolone therapy quit working at its prescribed dosage. Our local classical veterinarian encouraged me to take Zack to The Animal Neurological Center (ANC) in Canton, Michigan for an MRI and the 'back surgery that he so desperately needed.' Upon the intake exam, the ANC DVM immediately ruled that Zack had an autoimmune mediated vaccinosis response

to his rabies vaccine. At this point, we did not know what to think. So we asked for a MRI to be performed on Zack to rule out back problems. The MRI indicated that Zack had absolutely no back problems. The ANC DVM started Zack on an autoimmune suppression program to get the polyarthritis vaccinosis in remission. Finally, we have a definitive diagnosis!

The morale to our story is that pet owners must take responsibility for minimizing the amount of damage we do to our pets with routine vaccinations. We are making our pets sick with vaccinosis in an attempt to keep them well by administering vaccines! This begs the questions: Are some present day canine chronic diseases the result of vaccinosis? What is worse - the disease a dog may contract without vaccinations, or the attempted vaccine disease prevention that may cause vaccinosis?

To adequately deal with the issue of vaccinosis, the veterinarian profession will need to create a better linkage between the holistic and traditional or classical practices of veterinary medicine. We are seeking the services of a local Doctor of Veterinary Medicine who has successfully melded the best of both worlds, traditional and holistic veterinary medicine.

Zack is almost back to his old self with the latest autoimmune suppression regimen. We can only hope that we will succeed in a long-term treatment of Zack's condition. Dr. W. Jean Dodds was right all along!

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