

Update on Injection Site Sarcomas in Cats

It is now a more critical time than ever for cat owners to ask questions about the type of vaccine being administered to your cat. Cats have an ability to develop tumors, often sarcomas, at injection sites. The latest information indicates that these tumors can develop as a result of chronic inflammation, injuries, non-absorbable sutures, microchips, long acting antibiotic injections and some cats have a genetic tendency to develop tumors. The vast majority of sarcomas, however, are associated with the injection of vaccinations ¹. The incidence of injection site sarcomas varies between 1 in every 1,000 cats to 1 in every 10,000 cats ². Cats can develop these tumors even 10 years after an injection²!

The most recent studies have consistently shown that the development of sarcomas was significantly less when cats were administered recombinant vaccinations^{3,1}. We hope to see a substantial decrease in the number of vaccine associated sarcomas during our careers, however, it is not going to happen unless cat owners demand non-adjuvanted vaccines. In other words, cat owners need to *choose* Purevax vaccinations. We recognize that cats who have had vaccinations at animal shelters and vaccine clinics are not likely to receive non-adjuvanted vaccines. The new technology to develop non-adjuvanted vaccinations does cost more, and therefore these vaccinations are more expensive.

Some people will have a tendency to downplay the significance of these tumors. So what does this mean to a cat owner? If your cat is diagnosed with a tumor, the first step will be to take a biopsy of the tumor. If you have a cat which is confirmed to have an injection site sarcoma the next step is evaluating the extension of the tumor- most commonly with a CT scan or MRI. Surgery is the next step and commonly involves amputation of the leg, and sometimes involves removal of the scapular bones of the shoulder, rib resection, and sometimes amputation of part of the vertebrae of the back. Surgery is then followed by aggressive radiation and chemotherapy. Even with aggressive treatment, prognosis is poor, and euthanasia is often the final outcome. To top it all off, you as a cat owner, can expect to spend \$10,000 to \$20,000 on treatment.

So, is it worth spending a few dollars more for a Purevax vaccination? In our minds, YES! At DOCS we have exclusively used Purevax vaccines on our patients for the last 10 years. We care greatly about our patients' long term health, and we try very hard to keep up with the most current information, advances, and technology available to benefit our clients and patients.

1. Hendrick, M.J., 2011. Musings on feline injection site sarcomas. *The Veterinary Journal* 188, 130-131.
2. Martano, M., Morello, E., Buracco, P., 2011. Feline injection-site sarcoma: past, present and future perspectives. *The Veterinary Journal* 188, 136-144.
3. Srivastav, A., Kass, P., McGill, L., Farver, T., Kent, M. , 2012. Comparative vaccine-specific and other injectable-specific risks of injection- site sarcomas in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, volume 241, number 5, 595-602.