

## Vaccine Side Effects—What To Watch For Dr. Maria Berger



As shown in the previous article, vaccinations are an important part of keeping our cats happy and healthy. Vaccines today are very safe and the vast majority of vaccinated cats experience no other side effects than a night of extra sleepiness. In any population, however, there will be individuals that are sensitive to a certain vaccine or to vaccines in general. Knowing what signs and symptoms to watch for is the key to catching an adverse reaction to a vaccination.

Vaccine reactions fall into two categories: localized reactions and systemic reactions. Localized reactions take the form of a lump under the skin at the site where a vaccine was injected. They generally appear approximately 14 days after a vaccination, and seem to "pop up" overnight. These lumps are usually firm and non painful when touched. Most will resolve in 6-8 weeks. If such a lump does not resolve within the two month time period, it should be biopsied and submitted to a laboratory for evaluation to make sure it is not a more dangerous type of lump, such as a tumor. It is important to report these lumps to the veterinarian's office and have them evaluated if they occur. In most cases, changing to a different vaccine manufacturer will prevent a reoccurrence of the problem.

Systemic vaccine reactions come in two varieties. Anaphylactic reactions occur within minutes of receiving a vaccination and can be immediately life threatening. This is the same type of reaction that occurs in people who are very allergic to bee stings. The vaccine triggers a severe allergic reaction in the body. Immediate treatment with intravenous medications and fluids is needed to correct the situation. This is a very rare event, and in 14 years of practice I have only witnessed this reaction once. The second type of systemic reaction is the more common one, and is called a delayed hypersensitivity reaction. It usually occurs between two and twelve hours after receiving a vaccination, and can manifest with many different symptoms. The most common symptoms are vomiting, severe itchiness, or fever. Occasionally, a cat may show soreness in the leg that received the vaccine, or extreme lethargy lasting more than just the usual 12 hours. The signs may range from mild to severe, depending on the cat.

In the majority of these systemic reactions, medical intervention is needed to break the allergic response and help the pet to feel better at a faster rate. Injections of antihistamines and short acting

steroid medications are the most common medicines used. Extra fluids may be given to prevent dehydration and to help lower a fever if it is present. Response to treatment is usually quick, and most of these cats will be back to their old selves within 24 hours. In these situations, we will not only change to a different vaccine manufacturer, but we will usually recommend giving no more than one vaccine at a time, and/or pre-medicating the cat with antihistamines/steroids prior to receiving their vaccinations(s).

Vaccine reactions can be scary, and thankfully they occur in a very small part of the feline population. Being aware of what to watch for is they key to success in identifying those individual cats that will need special care when receiving routine vaccinations.

## Tech Tips Vaccines Recommendations By Lisa McKeiver, LVT

### Kittens

Kittens receive 2-3 distemper vaccines, 3-4 weeks apart, depending on their age, the final vaccines being given at 16 weeks of age. They receive 2 feline leukemia, also 3-4 weeks apart. They are given a rabies vaccines no sooner than 12 weeks.

### Indoor Adults

Distemper vaccine is boosted yearly. Feline leukemia (if given, depending on the cats lifestyle, exposure etc.) is boosted yearly. Rabies is boosted every 1-3 years.

### Outdoor Adults

Distemper and leukemia are boosted yearly, and rabies every 1-3 years.

### Senior Indoor Cats

Depends on the cat's lifestyle. Updated on distemper every 3 years. Leukemia every 3 years depending on lifestyle. Rabies every 3 years. Ask one of our doctors for their recommendations.

## Meet the Staff Pets Niki Zimmerman VA



June Wolf, L.V.T. owns a domestic shorthaired, orange tabby cat named Nibbles & Bites or Niblet for short. Niblet found

his owner at seven weeks of age at a Michigan State University horse barn. He just celebrated his seventeenth birthday on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Being seventeen he doesn't have any real favorite toys, the closest thing for him would be his heated bed. The foods he likes best are Eukanuba, any fish flavored canned food, and of course he loves his tuna. Niblet's main hobby is ignoring the annoying ferrets he shares his house with when they run over and roll over him during their inter-ferret wrestling matches.

In his younger days Niblet made the Lansing State Journal. He was named the best-dressed cat at the Michigan State University Student Cat Show. He was dressed in bandages and braces as a car accident victim. When he was eleven years old he welcomed a new feline into his house. His nose was out of joint for only three hours and then he curled up and went to sleep with his newest friend.

The funniest thing he ever did was when June took him to her parent's house for his first Christmas. He removes all of the rope tinsel off of her mother's formal Christmas tree by rolling in it. Lucky for him, June's mom was laughing so hard she couldn't be mad at her first grandkitty! The best thing Niblet has taught June is that even the greatest cat at home can be beyond awful outside of their environment, like at the vet's office. At his prime to be safely handled her darling boy required a muzzle, a towel wrapped around him, and the humans wearing thick bite-proof leather gloves.

One thing June thought was cute as a kitten was his behavior of licking, then nibbling, then chewing, then gnawing on her fingers, hence his name Nibbles & Bites. But she cautions, let this be a lesson to discourage undesirable behavior when it first begins. As a full-grown cat he still does this to get attention or show affection at any time, day or night.

The thing June (and probably Niblet too) likes least about him is his growing number of medical problems as he ages. She spends ten minutes every morning giving him medications, fluids under his skin, and rearranging litter boxes (and her life) for his comfort. To June though the extra chores are just part of living with an elderly cat, and it has taught her to treasure him as a whole, his good points and his bad.

## July's Cat Of The Month: Midnight Cobb

Christine Hoye VA



Midnight is a 6 year old, neutered male, black, long haired cat. Midnight has used one of his nine lives on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006. His curiosity got the better of him. His owners, Jackie and

Lee Cobb, have boxes of old stuff placed in the rafters of their basement. As Midnight was rummaging through a box, he found himself being poked by a very sharp object. That object was a bow-fishing arrow. He then tried to get away from this painful object and somehow got it caught in his fur, the string attached to it wrapped it around his legs. His owners tried to help him and could not get him out of the rafters. Jackie decided to call us, and 911. A Kent County

Sheriff and the Plainfield Fire Department were dispatched. Midnight, however decided he did not want any help from the sheriff or the fire department. Jackie called us back requesting we come out and tranquilize him

They were able to cut the line and Midnight escaped to the security of the bedroom. When Dr. Berger and Lisa arrived he was hiding out under a chair. Dr. Berger and Lisa blocked off under the bed with pillows so Midnight had no place to hide. They then covered him with a towel so they could get a hold of him (The Staff of CCN are not Midnight's favorite people), and give him a tranquilizer.



After about 5 minutes, Midnight was calm and relaxed, Dr. Berger was able to start shaving the hair away from the arrow to find out how bad the damage was. As she clipped the hair away, they were surprised to find out the arrow was mainly just tangled in Midnight's long hair. Where the razors from the arrow lay along Midnight skin there was a laceration on his hip. They clipped the hair away from the wound and got him ready for a trip to the Animal Emergency Clinic to have some stitches put in. We are happy to report that Midnight has fully recovered from his adventure. We would also like to give special thanks to the Kent Country Sheriff's Department (we unfortunately do not have the name of the responding officer) and The Plainfield Fire Department for responding, we all know that it is hard to know who to call in these situations, so Thanks to all who responded.

## Cat Breed Of The Month: Egyptian Mau



Lisa McKeiver LVT

The Egyptian Mau is one of the oldest breeds known. They have been clearly identified in the artwork of ancient Egyptians. Mau is the Egyptian word for cat. Experts believe that the Mau is domesticated from a sub-species of the African Wild Cat. They were imported to



# CCN Mews

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the United States in 1956 by a Russian princess., they were recognized by The Cat Fanciers Association in 1977.