



THE better medicine™ BULLETIN

Medical Advances and Perspectives
in Companion Animal Care

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7 Steps to Success to Convert Your Staff and Clients to 3-Year Vaccination Protocols

To help you easily convert
to 3-year protocols,
Intervet provides the
implementation tools
discussed in this bulletin at
continuum3.com/tools.html.
Simply download and print
materials as often as you'd
like—or contact your local
Intervet distributor.

The great debate regarding extended vaccination protocols is over. Continuum® DAP—a modified live vaccine fully labeled and approved by the USDA to protect dogs for 3 years against canine distemper, adenovirus, and parvovirus—is now available from Intervet Inc.^{1,2} In a recent survey, nearly 80% of practitioners polled responded positively to the use of USDA-approved, 3-year vaccines. More and more practitioners are converting their practices to extended protocols every day.³

To help you smoothly implement 3-year protocols in your practice, we've outlined 7 proven and profitable steps from Ernest Ward, Jr., DVM, well-known practice management consultant, speaker, and owner of Seaside Animal Care in Calabash, North Carolina:



Ernest Ward, Jr., DVM



Understand the science.

New guidelines from the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA),

and leading universities advocate use of core antigens at extended intervals based on individual needs to provide immunity and reduce risk of vaccine-related adverse events.^{4,5} To help you clarify your opinions and decide what is right for your practice, let the scientific data supporting the new guidelines be your guide.

Likewise, if you decide to incorporate 3-year vaccines into your annual protocols, use science to make your vaccine selections. Critically study individual vaccine labels and related challenge data published in peer-reviewed journals. Challenge data are considered to be the gold standard when evaluating immunity in dogs and the ultimate validation of whether a particular vaccine offers proven 3-year duration of immunity.^{4,6} Vaccines vary tremendously in postvaccination duration of immunity based on route of administration, immunizing strains and antigen content, potency, master seed virus, production method, adjuvant used (if any), level of attenuation, and whether the vaccine contains killed or modified live virus.^{5,7}

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Address the label change.

“The availability of Continuum DAP for use at 3-year intervals changes what we can and should tell our clients about vaccination and how we should approach our vaccination strategies,” says Dr. Ward.

“It allows us to implement the AAHA guidelines with full USDA-label support, thus avoiding the legal and ethical implications of using a 1-year labeled vaccine at 3-year intervals. With the 3-year label claim, neither veterinarians nor our clients can continue to accept the ‘vaccinate for everything, every year’ policy that has persisted for the past 50 years.”



Develop a protocol for your practice.

Review guidelines and develop protocols in light of your practice standards and goals and disease concerns in your area. Then, further tailor protocols based on each patient's risk factors.^{4-6,8} “The time for individualized care is now, and the 3-year vaccine is an important tool in the delivery of this modern approach to veterinary medicine,” says Dr. Ward.

Intervet's *Guidelines for Your Clinic: Implementing 3-Year Protocols with Continuum DAP* offers sample protocols and will help you segment your patients based on individual pet lifestyles and risk factors. This guide also shows you how 3-year Continuum DAP fits in with the other vaccines in your annual programs.



Educate and support your staff.

Discuss the science and rationale behind the new AAHA guidelines (and your decision to implement them) with your staff. They will appreciate having the support of a USDA-approved 3-year label and corresponding challenge data to back clinic recommendations to clients.⁸ Listen to your staff. What do they think and hear about vaccination protocols? What are their concerns about converting clients?⁸

“Help staff prepare by hosting two training sessions—the first to review vaccine immunology and your rationale for 3-year protocols and the second to do a test run to help staff communicate with clients,” suggests Dr. Ward. “Try scripting discussions regarding customized protocols and have your staff members role-play to increase their effectiveness. Intervet's new Staff Training Video, *Making the Move to Customized Care: Tips for Successful Implementation of 3-Year Canine Vaccination Protocols*, is a great resource to help you run these training sessions.”



Educate and support your clients.

Take 3 to 5 minutes during exam times to explain to clients *why* your practice has switched to 3-year protocols with Continuum DAP. The free, client-friendly brochure, *Important*



Notice About Your Dog's Vaccinations, will help you explain how extended intervals provide disease protection with increased safety and comfort.

Listen and respond to any client concerns. For example, if a client expresses concern that boarding or grooming facilities might not accept the 3-year vaccination intervals, offer to send a letter (see continuum3.com/tools.html for a pre-written, customizable letter) to confirm that your patient has received USDA-approved, 3-year Continuum DAP and is therefore protected against distemper, adenovirus, and parvovirus.

Position and promote your practice as a “customized care clinic that supports 3-year DOI vaccines.” Use local newspaper advertising or a client mailing to announce that your practice now offers 3-year vaccine protocols with USDA-approved Continuum DAP (customizable advertisements and letters are available at continuum3.com/tools.html). Clinic newsletter articles, on-hold recordings, lobby displays, and invoice notes are also quick, easy ways to reinforce your position.

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Redefine annual or semiannual visits.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to change your reminder card system to encourage visits for annual or semiannual exams rather than for vaccines. The postcard and need to see the veterinarian, rather than the list of vaccines, drive the visit.

Also, emphasize other aspects of wellness during the appointment. Have your clients fill out the brief questionnaire, *Your Dog's Annual Examination Report*, when they arrive for their pets' exams. Their answers will help you identify areas, such as diagnostics or dental care, for discussion and follow-up. Then, as you examine the pet, simply flip over the questionnaire and complete and discuss the *Canine Annual Examination Report* checklist to provide added value to your client.

“In my practice, we spend about 27 minutes dealing with healthcare issues and about 3 minutes on vaccines,” says Dr. Ward. “Vaccines have saved more lives than anything else in veterinary medicine. However, to sustain health and well-being we should also focus on senior care, nutrition and weight management, dental care, behavioral issues, and long-term drug monitoring.”



Maintain profitability.

Continuum DAP allows you to practice better medicine and build client loyalty. You can ethically charge more for a technically superior, USDA-approved 3-year vaccine. Over a 3-year period, vaccine costs to you will be about the same as with annual revaccinations. As a result, you can charge clients the same as previously or increase the price for a premium vaccine.



Another key to enhancing profits is to follow Step 6 and emphasize thorough exams, parasite and health screenings, lifestage medicine, diagnostics, and behavior counseling—all of which will vastly improve pets' quality of life. The August 2005 issue of *The Better Medicine Bulletin* is chock-full of pricing strategies.

“We often have less than 30 minutes a year to reinforce our recommendations,” says Dr. Ward. “By reducing the frequency of vaccinations, you will have more time to educate clients and offer services to provide better care. According to the AVMA-KPMG mega-study published in 1999, educated clients provide better care for their pets and spend more money at our clinics!”⁹



Conclusion

Lead the way, rather than scramble to follow. The steps and tools identified here will guide you through a successful conversion to customized vaccination and the application of 3-year vaccination protocols with Continuum DAP—a move that will help ensure your practice's continued success. “Pet owners spend 10 billion dollars a year on veterinary services in the US—extended vaccination protocols let us focus on these additional services to provide more complete care,” says Dr. Ward. “In the end, we all will benefit.”

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