

## Contagious Disease Prevention Requirements for Boarding, Grooming, Day Care, and Training Class Guests

*“Traditional Values, Innovative Medicine”*

As veterinary professionals **we commonly see contagious disease transmission** in dogs and cats using local boarding, day care, grooming, and training facilities. **Most of these costly diseases would be preventable** if these facilities would create and adhere to policies that keep out or isolate pets that are at risk of spreading illnesses. These pet service businesses have escaped serious scrutiny because most clinical signs of common contagious diseases don't often show up for weeks (kennel cough), months (intestinal parasites), or even years (feline leukemia) after exposure.

**At Merrimack Veterinary Hospital we are very proud to have in place disease prevention standards** that ensure to the best of our ability that all pets leave our facility as healthy as they entered. No animal service business can prevent disease transmission entirely, as the animal's own stress/anxiety from being away from home can lead to diarrhea, cystitis, or even reveal pre-existing underlying disease. However, the careless practice of housing pets together without proof that they have been properly vaccinated and tested for common contagious diseases is not acceptable.

The short-term financial gain achieved (through boarding, grooming, day care, and training fees) by admitting a potentially infectious animal into a facility housing healthy pets is not justifiable. Some of these preventable diseases are *even contagious to humans* (i.e. rabies, intestinal parasites). Our pets and your family deserve better safety measures than that.

**At MVH we are trying to lead the animal care industry in pet safety and disease prevention.** Before any client can make an appointment for boarding, grooming, or day care, we require that all cats and dogs have been regularly seen by a veterinarian, are vaccinated against contagious diseases, and are free of internal parasites.

We encourage you to come to us with questions regarding these policies and we hope that you understand that ***these requirements are in place to protect your pet(s).***

### **Veterinary Examination (Dogs and Cats)**

Wellness exams are the most important component of companion animal health as this is where most owner education occurs regarding contagious disease prevention. We want to be sure that a veterinarian has examined your pet with you within the last twelve months and has either not found or has treated discovered contagious disease(s).

### **Rabies Vaccine (Dogs and Cats)**

A current rabies vaccine has always been a mandatory necessity at MVH for all grooming patients, boarders, and day care dogs. We require that if your pet is thirty days overdue for the rabies vaccine, they must receive the vaccine ten days prior to their appointment. This is for the safety of your pet, other people's pets, and our staff. The vaccine efficacy is not immediate after receiving the injection and your pet's immune system needs time to develop that immunity.

### **Distemper Vaccine (Dogs and Cats)**

A current distemper vaccine is required. It is usually written as some variation of "FVRCP" for cats and "DA2P-L" for dogs. The DA2P-L is commonly referred to as the canine distemper vaccine. This vaccine protects against canine Distemper (nervous system disease), Adenovirus (liver disease), Parvovirus (severe intestinal damage), +/- Leptospirosis (rare but often fatal liver and kidney disease).

The FVRCP vaccine (commonly referred to as the feline "distemper" vaccine) stands for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia. Rhinotracheitis and calicivirus cause upper respiratory infections (sneezing, runny eyes and nose) while panleukopenia virus may cause death in young kittens and severe diarrhea in older cats.

### **Fecal Sample (Dogs and Cats)**

We require that your pet be free of internal parasites. All dogs need to have had an annual fecal sample checked by a veterinarian and if appropriate, treated for contagious internal parasites or bacteria. This applies to all cats (indoor and outdoor) as well, although we will accept cats that have had an annual prophylactic de-worming without a fecal test (this is for outdoor cats where stool is not accessible). Please note that if parasites are discovered in your pet's stool while at our facility, we reserve the right to treat them (at owner's expense) to prevent the spread of parasites to others.

### **Bordetella Vaccine (Dogs only)**

This is known as the "kennel cough" vaccine. This protects your dog against certain strains of contagious respiratory infections. To protect your own dog, the vaccine is best given at least ten days prior to boarding, grooming, or day care although it can be administered at "check-in" if the pet is overdue.

### **FeLV / FIV Test (Cats only)**

We require that your cat has had an annual FeLV / FIV test prior to boarding or grooming with us (whether indoor only or indoor/outdoor). Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) are deadly viruses that can be passed between cats. Infected cats can carry and spread the virus for many years while never appearing sick. Leukemia can be spread via contact with infected urine and both can be passed from infected mothers to their offspring and both can be spread from cat to cat through oral and nasal secretions (especially saliva). Note that cats are NOT required to be FeLV or FIV vaccinated.

### **External Parasites (Dogs and Cats)**

Although highly recommended, we do not *require* a topical flea/tick preventive to be used on your pet. However, please note that if fleas or ticks are discovered on your pet during "check-in" or while at our facility, we reserve the right to refuse "check-in" or treat them (at owner's expense) to prevent the spread of these parasites to others.

Sincerely,  
The Professional Staff of Merrimack Veterinary Hospital