

It's Time to Put a Stop to the Mindless Over-Vaccination of Pets

Why are so many veterinarians still over-vaccinating pets when a simple blood test will tell them if the animals are immune? Are you, like so many pet parents, a nervous wreck each time your pet's rabies tag reaches its expiration date? If so, it's time to join the movement!

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

[Download Interview Transcript](#) | [Download my FREE Podcast](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dr. John Robb, a Connecticut veterinarian, has become known worldwide for his fight against profiteering and over-vaccination in veterinary medicine
- Dr. Robb's incredible story serves as a wake-up call to pet parents and the veterinary community about the dangers of bucking the system, and why the lives of companion animals hang in the balance
- Protect the Pets is the movement Dr. Robb founded to raise awareness about the dangers of over-vaccination and the urgent need to change existing rabies vaccination laws in the U.S.
- Protect the Pets is NOT an anti-vaccination movement; the goal is to protect animal companions from over-vaccination and vaccine toxicosis

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published June 25, 2017.

Today I'm talking with a very special guest, Dr. John Robb, a veterinarian for over 30 years and world famous almost overnight (more about that shortly). Dr. Robb attended veterinary school at the University of California, Davis in the early 1980s, followed by a one-year internship at a private practice in Connecticut, the New Haven Central Veterinary Hospital.

*"It's true I've come in the public eye more recently," says Dr. Robb. "But honestly, I've been fighting to be a veterinarian my whole career. The drive **profits in veterinary medicine** has really become a problem, especially with the advent of companies like Veterinary Centers of America (VCA) and the Mars Company coming in and owning veterinary hospitals.*

These are businessmen and businesswomen. These are people that want to make profits but don't necessarily have the best interest of the pets involved. And unfortunately, the veterinary establishment, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and other organizations, seem to be joining forces with them instead of putting their hands up and saying, 'We have a problem here.'"

Don't Save the Dog: Profits Over Pets

On Dr. Robb's very first overnight shift at New Haven Central, a vet tech dropped off a stray dog who had been hit by a car. The dog was in bad shape, and Dr. Robb was supposed to put him to sleep. The dog opened his eyes and looked at Dr. Robb, who of course worked the rest of the night to save him.

"I was in big trouble in the morning because I had spent a lot of money and there was no owner," Dr. Robb says. "I kind of knew at that point it wasn't really about the pets. Fortunately, the owner was eventually found and reunited with his dog, and he sang the praises of New Haven Central, so I was off the hot seat. But I learned there's a big thing about money in our profession that supersedes caring for the pets."

Dr. Robb has been fighting the system ever since, and especially on the topic of vaccines. Many people have understood for decades that we're over-vaccinating pets, but the problem seems to have bubbled to the surface recently in a big way.

'I'm Hurting My Patients With These Vaccines'

Like all veterinary students, Dr. Robb was taught in vet school that vaccines are good and prevent disease. But once he was a practicing DVM, he began to see vaccine side effects such as life-threatening anaphylaxis, as well as longer term vaccine-related disorders.

"I began to read the veterinary literature like JAVMA, the Journal of the Veterinary Medical Association," says Dr. Robb. "I started to research on my own. I came across veterinarians who had been showing that vaccines caused a lot of serious side effects, including hemolytic anemia and cancer at the injection sites. I had a problem now. I'm a veterinarian, and I'm hurting my patients with these vaccines."

Dr. Robb began changing the way he did things in his practice. For example, he lengthened the intervals between vaccines, and lowered the dose because it was very clear to him that small pets couldn't handle the same amount of vaccine as larger animals.

Increasingly, Corporations Dictate How Veterinary Medicine Is Practiced

When he bought a Banfield Pet Hospital practice, Dr. Robb realized the franchise was very much into over-vaccinating. So he put his own protocols in place, including "smaller dogs receive a lower volume," and only one vaccine per visit. He also didn't give all the vaccines the franchise recommended. Then Mars Petcare bought Banfield. Dr. Robb explains what happened next:

"They basically came in and said, 'Look, we want your franchise back. In fact, we're buying all the franchises back. We control the doctors. We're going to give you about a third of what it's worth and you're going to leave. Maybe you can go open up another hospital.'

I said, 'I'm not going anywhere. I have 15 years left on my contract. You can't tell me how to practice veterinary medicine. That's my job, so get out.' But they took my franchise anyway. They said if I didn't go quietly, they would report me to the state board, because I was lowering my vaccine volume and they said it was against the law. And so they did. They reported me to the Connecticut State Board of Veterinary Medicine."

Buck the System? You'll Be Handcuffed to a Stretcher and Taken to a Psych Ward

Mars/Banfield sent a letter to all 5,000 of Dr. Robb's clients stating that their pets weren't protected (immunized against disease). So Dr. Robb contacted his clients as well, and recommended they have their pets titer tested to show they were protected. That's when the strong-arming really escalated.

"They put armed guards in front of all the PetSmarts in Connecticut," Dr. Robb explains. (Banfields are located inside PetSmart stores.) "Two sets of armed guards, one paid for by PetSmart, and one paid for by Mars. They made a big scene and tried to blame it on me."

The first time he attempted to visit his practice, Dr. Robb was handcuffed to a stretcher and taken to a psychiatric ward.

"The second time, they arrested me," he says. "I'm just trying to hand out literature to do a titer and not revaccinate the dog without doing that, because I knew my pets were protected. I had done titers and I knew it."

It ended up in federal court. They lied to the judge and said, 'We were offering titers.' They did everything they could not to do a titer. They injured so many pets, some died, because they revaccinated all of them. It was part of a cover-up. I was vaccinating correctly and they didn't want anybody to see that their pets had immunity.

The fight with Mars was in front of the state veterinary board, who had copies of all the scientific articles I had collected on vaccines, because I provided them to them. They told me they didn't care about science. These are veterinarians and they don't care about science? They said I broke the law. Even if I have to kill my patients, I have to obey the law. I said, 'You guys are crazy. I mean, you're crazy.'

This is the state of veterinary medicine today. We have mandated rabies laws, when instead we could take a simple blood test and find out that these pets don't need the shot. We veterinarians are in bondage now, forced to injure our patients. Then you've got Mars coming in and trying to control veterinarians as their resource.

Karen, I thank God you're standing up. I thank God other veterinarians are standing up, because most veterinarians want to do the right thing, but they're scared to death about their license and repercussions."

A Movement to Return Morality to the Veterinary Profession

I received a rabies vaccine at the age of 13 because I was getting into wildlife rehabilitation. When I entered veterinary school and told them I'd been vaccinated at 13, they insisted I be titered rather than automatically re-vaccinated. So why is it perfectly okay to vaccinate pets against rabies over and over and over throughout their lives? I think we know why. It's the almighty dollar. Vaccinations are a major source of income for veterinary practices.

But the good news is the nightmare Dr. Robb has lived through has turned him into an agent for change. He and his wife used their retirement savings to start the **Protect the Pets** movement in 2006. "It was never to make money," says Dr. Robb, "but to bring morality back into veterinary medicine."

"I already had a track record of trying to stand up for the rights of pets, the people who own them, and veterinarians. Now suddenly I'm talking to a worldwide audience."

Because I was willing to put my license on the line and all my resources to do what I love best, which is be a veterinarian and protect my patients, this has become a movement of the heart. People are joining me. People like you, Karen, and all the people who have been fighting these issues for years. We've reached a tipping point and now we're working together.

Before, we were isolated. The people whose pets were being injured and dying were isolated. They had no voice. They were told it wasn't the vaccination. Even though four hours after the shot, their pet was suddenly blind and seizing, it wasn't the shot. It just was coincidental blindness, coincidental epilepsy.

Or a pet began bleeding internally and was diagnosed with hemolytic anemia. Or there were suddenly tumors on the right hip at the injection site. 'It wasn't the shot,' they were told. Then one day they realized there was a public figure out there saying, 'It WAS the shot.'

Pet Parents Are Coming Forward to Tell Their Stories

Veterinarians have no legal obligation to report adverse reactions to vaccines, so there's no real database. The veterinary industry, which includes the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), seems to have no interest in creating one. It's deeply disturbing. These are veterinarians. How can they not be concerned about the adverse effects of pet vaccines?

But pet parents are coming forward to tell their stories, and they are the ones driving this change, because they've had enough. As veterinarians, Dr. Robb and I and others are working to amend the rabies laws and bring morality back to a profession gone wrong where vaccines are concerned.

"Corporations like Mars, who think it's okay to victimize pets for profits, are going to be rudely awakened, because we, the people, control them," says Dr. Robb. "Because we spend money and we decide where we're going to spend it. We have the power here. We just have to unite. That's the bottom line here. We are uniting now."

Why Is This Life-Threatening Vaccine Reaction Kept Hidden?

According to Dr. Robb, one of the best-kept vaccine secrets is the incidence of anaphylaxis. I personally know people who've adopted or purchased a puppy and had the pup die of anaphylactic shock on the exam table at the first vet visit immediately after receiving a vaccination. Invariably, the veterinarian who gave the shot tells the devastated owner the vaccine had nothing to do with the puppy's death. It's asinine.

Dr. Robb references a 2005 Purdue University study that addressed adverse events occurring within the first 72 hours after vaccinating dogs. One of the study's chief investigators was a Banfield medical director named Dr. Karen Faunt. The study showed that the incidence of adverse reactions is higher in smaller pets, and multiple vaccines cause more reactions. However, the study's conclusion was that vaccines are safe.

During a legal deposition, Dr. Robb's attorney asked Faunt: "Why didn't you include in your study the dogs that died of anaphylaxis? Certainly those reactions occurred within the first 72 hours?"

"I'm telling you, her jaw dropped," says Dr. Robb. "Because it turns out there were at least six animals that died of anaphylaxis and they didn't include them in the study. Instead, they concluded the vaccines were safe."

Become a Partner in the Protect the Pets Movement

*"Even as we're talking here today," says Dr. Robb, "there are pets out there being injured, dying, and being given injections they don't need. It's happening right this minute, and there's no time to waste. Lives depend on education, encouraging each other, and taking action steps such as contacting state legislators. You can look me up on **Facebook**, John Robb, for more information."*

You can also reach Dr. Robb at 203-731-4251, or contact him through his **Protect the Pets** website.

"People think I'm so popular that I can't talk to people," he says. "Baloney. This movement is about you, and I want to talk to you. I want to know what your situation is. We need to work together. I need to hear people's voices, understand their situations, and see if they want to be part of the movement."

The first goal is to amend existing **rabies laws**. There are 200 million pet parents and advocates, and 40,000 members of the veterinary establishment. As Dr. Robb points out, WE should be dictating to THEM and not the other way around. As pet owners, we make the decisions for the animals in our care.

An Important Distinction: We're NOT Anti-Vaxxers

It's important to point out that we're not anti-vaccines. There's a huge difference between too many vaccinations and protective vaccinations. We're not advocating never vaccinating your pet under any circumstances. We're advocating the smart use of minimal vaccines to create immunity against disease in puppies and kittens, with follow-up titers for the lifetime of the pet.

I think it's really important to make that distinction. There's a big difference between creating protective immunity in a pet and creating vaccine toxicosis. What Dr. Robb and I are talking about is the danger of over-vaccinating dogs and cats.

Some veterinary vaccines are substantially more toxic than others. It's your job as your pet's advocate to know enough about the subject to make the best decisions for your animal companion. And if your vet doesn't respect your opinion and point of view, find a new vet.

"The job of veterinarians is to vaccinate to produce immunity with the smallest volume and the smallest number of vaccines to produce that immunity," says Dr. Robb. "Once the pet is immune, we're done."

Titer Tests in Lieu of Re-vaccinations

Once an animal develops immunity to rabies, parvo and distemper, it's easily measured by a titer. Any positive titer means the pet is immune.

"I was speaking to Dr. Ronald Schultz yesterday, and he's helping us," says Dr. Robb. "He's in favor of titers, as you know. He's been trying to put this approach forward for a long time. He pointed out that rabies is the worst of all the vaccines in terms of toxic reactions, so it's extremely important to deal with the rabies laws first."

According to Dr. Robb, about 20% to 25% of veterinarians are now doing distemper/parvo titers in lieu of vaccinating. But most vets still won't do a rabies titer because rabies vaccines are the only vaccines mandated by law in all 50 states. A positive rabies titer isn't acceptable in lieu of re-vaccination.

Many vets charge an arm and a leg for titer testing, which is unfortunate. Dr. Robb currently charges \$32 for a rabies titer and \$54 for all three (rabies, parvo and distemper for dogs). Some vets will do a blood draw for under \$10, others charge much more. Dr. Robb suggests finding a vet who will do it for a reasonable price. The cost of titer tests will decrease once they become the rule rather than the exception.

Putting the Heart Back in the Practice of Veterinary Medicine

In addition to helping pets and pet parents, Dr. Robb is also very passionate about helping veterinarians who are in bondage to the current system.

"We want to free them to practice veterinary medicine from a heart perspective," he explains. "That's also what this movement is about. The suicide rate among veterinarians is four times higher than the general population. It's because they have to go against their heart and injure animals."

I so appreciate Dr. Robb's passion. I'm heartbroken over what has happened to him, but grateful for the beautiful gift that has resulted from his difficulties. He has blown the topic of over-vaccination wide open in the veterinary community, and I'm forever thankful because I'm not sure it would have happened without him.

"One more comment about the worldwide thing," says Dr. Robb. "It's worldwide, because we may set the standards in this country, and then other countries will adopt them. There are pets in Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan and all over the globe. We want to reach all of them. We'll start Protect the Pets England and Protect the Pets France. We are going to go wherever pets are being victimized. We're going to set them free. That's what this is all about."

Dr. Robb and Rodney Habib of Planet Paws put together a short information video of Dr. Robb testifying about over-vaccination and overdosing issues in pets. You can view the video here at [**Planet Paws**](#). Thank you, Dr. John Robb!
