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Next WSAVA Congress:

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INTRODUCTION
The WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines Group (VGG) was initially established in 2006 following recognition by the WSAVA Board and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the need for globally applicable recommendations on best-practice for the vaccination of dogs and cats. During the first phase of activity of the VGG (2006 – 2007) a substantial guidelines document was produced, published in the scientific literature and made freely available on the WSAVA website (latterly with a Spanish translation). This document included a set of invaluable ‘fact sheets’ related to the major canine and feline vaccine-preventable infectious diseases and a set of ‘frequently-asked questions’ (FAQs) related to vaccination practice.

VGG PHASE II
The VGG was reconvened in 2009 for a second phase of activity that will conclude at the time of the WSAVA Congress in Geneva in June 2010. During this year the VGG held three face-to-face meetings (Miami in February 2009, Prague in May 2009 and Rome in February 2010) and undertook much of its work by electronic communication between these meetings. This second phase of VGG activity has led to three specific outcomes which are summarized below.

GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE 2007 GUIDELINES
During Phase II the initial task was to assess the global impact of the 2007 guidelines. This was conducted by a survey of the 70 WSAVA member countries through the Assembly representative for each nation. The 27 responses to this survey gave invaluable insight into the global issues surrounding companion animal vaccination. It was very pleasing to note that the 2007 WSAVA vaccination guidelines had significant international impact. The availability of the guidelines, accompanied in some instances by local public pressure, led to many countries either formally adopting the WSAVA guidelines as national policy, or using the WSAVA guidelines as a basis for formulation of a National policy document where no such policy had previously existed. It is clear that the controversy surrounding small companion animal vaccination has not diminished and that there is an urgent requirement for education of practicing veterinarians in this area. The members of the VGG have been actively engaged in delivering national and international lectures to help address this demand.

2010 GUIDELINES DOCUMENT
The second major task has been the production of an updated 2010 version of the vaccination guidelines. At the time of writing (January 2010) the final draft of this document has been prepared and we are hoping for publication in the scientific literature and public release early in 2010. Although the fundamental guidelines for use of vaccines remain largely unchanged, the revised document includes much new background information included following feedback from the 2007 version, specifically:

1. A clear indication of the purpose of a guidelines document.
2. A discussion of passive immunization for canine distemper virus (CDV) infection.
4. Discussion of differences in approach to feline upper respiratory virus (FHV-1 and FCV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) vaccination.
5. Recommendations for sites of vaccination for cats.
6. An update on cross-protection for canine parvovirus (CPV) 2c.
8. An expanded list of almost 60 frequently asked questions (FAQs). Feedback suggested that this aspect of the 2007 guidelines document was particularly useful to practitioners.

9. An image bank of major canine and feline vaccine-preventable diseases. The VGG believes that these images will be of great value to the practicing veterinarian during the ‘vaccination interview’ with clients. The images will be made freely available via the WSAVA website and provide visual evidence of the significance and severity of infectious diseases that may be prevented by vaccination. The images may be used in the consultation room whilst addressing the ‘risk-benefit’ issue of vaccination with pet owners.

INFORMATION DOCUMENT FOR OWNERS AND BREEDERS
The final outcome of Phase II will be the release (aimed for June 2010 to coincide with Congress) of a substantial information document for the owners and breeders of small companion animals. The VGG recognizes the importance of the animal owner in the decision making process regarding vaccination and is also aware of the amount of misinformation concerning vaccination that is publically available via the internet to our clients. The preparation of this document is an entirely novel concept and will provide an authoritative source of information that owners and breeders may freely access via the WSAVA website. The contents of this document will include information on:

1. Major infectious diseases of the dog and cat.
2. The immune response
3. The principles of vaccination
4. Types of vaccine
5. Drivers for change in vaccination protocols
6. Canine and feline vaccination guidelines
7. Reporting of adverse reactions
8. Glossary of terms
9. Image bank of canine and feline infectious diseases

FUTURE OF THE VGG
The work of the VGG is far from concluded. There will continue to be developments and changes in companion animal vaccinology that will require impartial expert opinion. There remains an enormous need for education in the areas of infectious disease microbiology, fundamental immunology and vaccinology. Particular challenges in vaccinology face small animal practitioners in the developing nations where there may be impact on the incidence of zoonoses through targeted vaccination of companion animal reservoirs of infection. At the time of writing (January 2010) the VGG is formulating a proposal for a third phase of activity, which we hope to announce during the Geneva congress.

MEMBERS OF THE VGG
Professor Michael J. Day, United Kingdom (Chairman)
Professor Marian C. Horzinek, The Netherlands
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REFERENCES