

VETS NEED VACCINATIONS TOO!

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Although we veterinarians focus on looking after the animals in our care, we too need to be protected from illnesses, some of which can pass between us and the animals we work with.



Apart from the standard vaccinations that all humans should have from childhood, set out for Jamaica by the Ministry of Health, there are vaccinations that are helpful because of the risk of occupational exposure. For veterinarians these may vary depending on the part of the world in which we live and work, and the area(s) of the profession in which we may specialize. Here are some:

Tetanus: Also known as “lockjaw” this disease is caused by the bacteria *Clostridium tetani*. It can affect multiple species with horses, donkeys, goats, sheep AND people being particularly susceptible. The tetanus germ can enter through penetrating wounds, such as those caused by dirty, rusty objects, and dog bites. Since vets are at risk of such injuries, we should be vaccinated against tetanus.

Influenza: Because some flu viruses can pass between species – especially between humans, pigs and birds – veterinarians may want to get flu shots every year, not only to reduce our chances of getting this debilitating and potentially

dangerous illness, but also to lower the risk of anthroponotic (human to animal) transmission from ourselves to our pig or poultry patients!

Rabies: This dangerous disease still kills thousands of people and animals around the world annually. Although Jamaica is fortunate to be considered rabies-free, we are surrounded by rabies-infected countries in the Caribbean and the Americas. In some, it is well controlled in dogs via strict vaccination programs, but may occur in wildlife. Veterinarians are usually vaccinated against rabies when in veterinary school, but may need to get boosters from time to time. In Jamaica, rabies vaccination is unavailable and vets currently have to access it overseas if we want to maintain protection just in case.

Vets who travel to various parts of the world may need to follow the vaccination guidelines set for the countries we may visit. If traveling to countries where Yellow Fever occurs, all persons should be vaccinated to protect themselves and to avoid health check delays at the airport when returning home.

Vaccinations are available at various public and private health facilities. Visit the Ministry of Health's website: www.moh.gov.jm for more information, or ask your family doctor!