TALKING WITH CLIENTS ABOUT VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19

As a trusted source of health information and care for our animal patients, how you speak with clients who may be hesitant about getting a COVID-19 vaccine can influence their willingness to consider it. One opportunity for opening the discussion might be when you’re vaccinating their animal. The value they place on their animal’s vaccination offers a natural link to a conversation about the value of vaccines for people as well.

BE EMPATHETIC AND COLLABORATIVE
• Be compassionate. If they have deferred vaccination, show empathy and genuine curiosity as to why.
• Be sensitive to family dynamics, circumstances, and personal health needs that may influence their decision.
• Avoid arguing and debating—taking a strong initial stance may backfire.

ASK FOR THEIR AGREEMENT BEFORE DISCUSSING VACCINATION
• Say something like, “If it’s okay with you, I’d like to talk with you about vaccination against COVID-19.”
• If the client says no, respect that.

IF THEY SAY YES, SPEAK—AND LISTEN—CAREFULLY
• Be compassionate and curious about the client’s mixed feelings, both the part of them that wants to trust the safety and importance of getting a vaccine and the part that feels hesitant.
• Talking out loud actually changes how we make choices; it can develop forward momentum. So let them talk—and listen.
• People who are hesitant about vaccination may find themselves spending a fair amount of time talking about why that is the case. So, try reversing that dynamic. Ask them to talk about what they know about the benefits of vaccination.

IF THEY HAVE QUESTIONS, HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR RESPONDING
• If a client asks questions about vaccine safety and risks, respond within the boundaries of your degree, ethics, and knowledge.
• If you feel you can accurately answer their question, respond with empathy, providing scientific information as needed, not opinions.
• If the client’s question requires information that exceeds your knowledge base, recommend that they speak with their medical provider or another knowledgeable expert, as needed.

Thank you for helping spread the word. We realize this can be challenging, but in addition to caring for our animal patients, as veterinarians, we have a public health mission. Sharing what we know about the value of preventive care is important to protecting the health and safety of our clients, our teams, and our communities. Together, we can make a difference.

INFORMATION YOU CAN SHARE ON COVID-19 VACCINATION.
Want to know more about the vaccines when talking with others? CDC offers lots of helpful information—from vaccine safety to who should get vaccinated. Of special value are FAQs for health professionals, like ourselves, that address a wide range of myths and facts. You’ll find that information at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/index.html