



Saving Lives with Antibody Titer Tests
Live Webcast Frequently Asked Questions

By Ronald D. Schultz, MS, PhD, ACVM

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1) Q: Our shelter does not have a vet on staff; can we order these tests ourselves?

A: If the shelter does not have a veterinarian on staff, the tests could be ordered through a consulting veterinarian. Please contact the titer test companies for more information. (See page 2 of FAQ's).

2) Q: Our staff person, in charge of medical evaluations is very good at what she does, but is not a CVT or veterinarian. Can she conduct these tests herself?

A: Yes, non-veterinary staff can perform the tests but the interpretation of the tests should ideally be done by a veterinarian or trained CVT/RVT.

3) Q: We do not have quarantine or isolation areas in our shelter. If we decide to do titer tests, and an animal shows no antibody titer, how can we keep that animal away from the general population until he or she builds immunity?

A: It would be best to identify a foster home or an area of the shelter that you can use as isolation, vaccinate that animal and then re-test in 2 weeks.

4) Q: Wouldn't it just be easier to vaccinate all incoming animals and not do titer tests?

A: All animals should ideally be vaccinated immediately on intake. This is an important step to prevent disease. Titer testing is helpful to use during outbreaks to determine which animals are protected and able to proceed through the system as usual, and which animals need extra protection through isolation or foster care until such time as they are antibody positive. Testing can also help determine which animals can be fast-tracked to adoption, and which animals will require extra precautions.

5) Q: What are the costs per animal for these tests?

A: The exact cost of running a titer test will vary depending on the number of pets being tested, whether the tests are being conducted in the clinic or shelter or sent to an outside lab, or whether they're being done by a private veterinarian on a companion animal. Please consult your veterinarian.

For shelters, the costs are more economical because of the number of samples you are running - the more tests you run, the less each sample will be because you have to run a control each time you run the test. Please contact the titer test companies for more information.

Biogal
Canine VacciCheck
Mr. Lenny Small
Email: len@biogal.co.il
<http://www.biogal.co.il/>

Pfizer/Synbiotics
TiterCHEK
Pfizer Animal Health: [800 733-5500](tel:8007335500)
Email: pah-vcs@pfizer.com

6) Q: Is there an on-site test for cats?

A: Yes, VacciCheck has a test called ImmunoComb Feline VacciCheck that evaluates the IgG antibody response to vaccination or infection by Feline Panleukopenia virus (FPV), Feline Herpes Virus (Rhinothrachiitis) (FHV) and Feline Calici Virus (FCV). Dr. Schultz's laboratory has also used TiterCHEK Canine Parvo Virus test for detection of panleukopenia antibody in outbreaks with cats and it has worked well.

7) Q: If an animal shows no immunity whatsoever even after vaccination, what do you recommend?

A: Re-vaccinate the animal using another MLV vaccine and hold the animal in isolation or a foster home for two weeks, then re-test for antibodies. Or follow up with a diagnostic laboratory with a gold standard test.

8) Q: We are a little rescue group with a limited budget. How can we justify titer tests when we could use that money to save more animals?

A: You can justify the expense by using the tests in an outbreak situation. By using titer tests to perform a risk assessment on exposed animals during an outbreak, you can figure out which animals are protected and can move through to adoption and which animals need isolation and monitoring. Animals with a positive titer are considered "low risk" to developing disease and animals without a titer are considered "high risk."

9) Q: Approximately how much additional staff time will doing antibody titer testing take per animal?

A: Each test takes about an hour to run. If you run multiple tests at the same time that will help reduce costs. You'll have to factor in staff time to collect the samples and if you're using TiterCHEK you'll have to factor in spinning the blood down to collect serum/plasma.

10) Q: Is there a list available of animal shelters and/or veterinary clinics that are currently using antibody titer tests?

A: There is not a list that is public. There is some information available, please contact Dr. Laurie Larson, Laboratory Assistant at the Dr. R.D. Schultz Laboratory – email address: larsonl@svm.vetmed.wisc.edu.

11) Q: Has there been any formal cost:benefit analysis done on the use of antibody titer tests?

A: Please contact the titer test companies (see page 2).

Vaccination is relatively cheap, but for those people that are concerned about vaccines, titer tests would be a good alternative. For the animal shelters the tests are a life preserving alternative to depopulation (euthanasia) during outbreaks, insuring that the cost to benefit analysis would be a win for the animals. And the tests performed at intake work great for fast tracking animals through the shelter system by placing them into new homes quickly.

12) Q: When our animal control shelter experienced a distemper outbreak, we were advised to depopulate the shelter. So now it seems that is not necessary. How can I convince my city officials that titer tests are the way to go?

A: First of all, the people in your community would support your efforts to save lives. If the shelter arbitrarily euthanizes every dog in the shelter because of an outbreak, considering that diagnostic tools are now available, it could turn into a public relations nightmare. Also, your city officials should be made aware that these diagnostic tests are cost effective in saving lives by being able to move animals into new homes faster, ensuring that they are healthy and protected from these diseases, and thereby promoting your shelter as a humane, progressive animal shelter that is highly regarded in the community.

13) Q: Is the webinar being recorded? If so, how do I access it?

A: You can use the same link you received when you registered to access the on-demand recording. You can also find a link to the on-demand version on the Maddie's Fund[®] website in the Maddie's InstituteSM section of our Resource Library.

14) Q: Is there a place on the Internet that we can go to watch how these tests are conducted?

A: Yes there are, here are some links:

Running TiterCHEK: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=549GSe5xzR0>

Running VacciCheck: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ4o6gFzqiw>

Interpreting VacciCheck: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAClweqyp2k>

TiterCHEK vs VacciCheck: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2_xQNLRaRw