TAIL VACCINATION IN CATS: A PILOT STUDY

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Feline injection site sarcomas affect 1–10 cats per every 10,000 vaccinated and are associated with high mortality. Radical resection may be curative, but is often associated with prolonged recovery, disfigurement and loss of function when tumors occur at currently recommended injection sites. The objective of this study was to assess alternatives to currently recommended vaccination sites in terms of preference by oncology practitioners, ease of injection and serological responses. Surgical, radiation and medical oncology practitioners were surveyed regarding their preference for vaccination sites based on the ease of tumor resection. A six-point Likert scale was used to measure each cat’s behavioral reaction to vaccination when injected subcutaneously in the distal hind limb or the distal tail. Serum collected before and 1–2 months after vaccination was tested for antibody titers against feline panleukopenia virus (FPV) and rabies virus (RV). The preferred sites for vaccination by 94 oncology practitioners were below the stifle (41%) and the tail (30%). There were no significant differences in the cats’ behavioral reaction to vaccination below the stifle (n = 31) and in the distal tail (n = 29). Of the cats seronegative for FPV at the time of vaccination, 100% developed protective antibody titers (≥40) against FPV 1–2 months following vaccination. For cats seronegative for RV, all but one cat (tail vaccine) developed acceptable antibody titers (≥0.5 IU/ml) against RV. Tail vaccination was well-tolerated and elicited similar serological responses to vaccination in the distal limbs.