



PUPPIES DOWNUNDER

Rationale behind commencement of vaccinations at 5-weeks

In 2015, Puppies Downunder, in consultation with our veterinary partner and Boehringer Ingelheim (the manufacturer of Protech vaccines), reviewed the outcomes of our previous vaccination schedule. We had observed that when the first C5 vaccination was administered at 6 weeks of age, a small number of puppies developed acute enteritis and died within several days of vaccination. Veterinary post-mortem findings confirmed the presence of vaccine-strain parvovirus rather than wild-type infection, consistent with the rare adverse reaction recognised in very young, immunologically naive puppies.

Scientific literature supports that modified-live parvovirus vaccines can, in rare cases, replicate excessively in pups with insufficient maternal antibodies, especially between 5½–6½ weeks of age, when natural maternal protection has waned but active immune competence is still developing (Greene CE, Infectious Diseases of the Dog and Cat, 2021; WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines 2024).

To address this, and with the manufacturer's technical guidance, Puppies Downunder advanced the first vaccination to 5 weeks of age, when puppies are still nursing and retain measurable maternal antibodies. This timing allows the maternal antibodies to moderate replication of the vaccine virus, providing a safe immune priming effect while eliminating the vaccine-induced illness previously observed at 6 weeks.

Our revised programme (C5 at 5 weeks, C4 at 7 weeks, and final C5 at 12 weeks) has been used for over 15 years with excellent safety and immunity outcomes. This adjustment exemplifies Puppies Downunder's commitment to continuous improvement, evidence-based husbandry, and the highest standards of animal welfare.