
Titer Testing: a Simple Blood Test

What is titer testing? A titer test (pronounced TIGHT er) is a laboratory test measuring the existence and level of antibodies to disease in blood. Antibodies are produced when an antigen (like a virus or bacteria) provokes a response from the immune system. This response can come from natural exposure or from vaccination. (Note: titering is also called serum vaccine antibody titering and serologic vaccine titering)*

How is the test performed? Your test result will have an explanation of what your pet's test result means. But if you want to know more, here's the test in a nutshell: First, one mL of blood is drawn. The sample is then diluted. Titer levels, expressed as ratios, indicate how many times blood can be diluted before no antibodies are detected. If blood can be diluted a 1000 times and still show antibodies, the ratio would be 1:1000. This is a "strong" titer. A titer of 1:2 would be weak.

Should you test for all diseases? The most recommended test examines antibodies for parvovirus, hepatitis (adenovirus) and distemper, the most important viruses.

NOTE: At Alpha K9 U, we also require that Bordetella testing is added as well.

Why test? The parvovirus/distemper test can help you or others (vets, groomers, kennel owners, etc.) determine if your dog requires additional vaccination. It is especially useful when making a decision about vaccinating an animal with unknown vaccination history, etc.

How often should you test titers for parvo and distemper? You're going to have to decide for yourself. Some vets recommend testing yearly, but this can be expensive. Others test every three years. Still others test five to seven years after vaccination. Why? Challenge tests show that successful vaccination against parvovirus gives most animals at least seven years of immunity. Distemper provides immunity for at least five to seven years.

Should you test for rabies antibodies? The rabies titer test will give you an indication of your dog's immunity if he or she is at particular risk for contracting rabies. **However, please be advised, the test results will NOT be accepted by Animal Control and most others, including Alpha K9 U, as a substitute for vaccination dogs as required by law.** Under Indiana law, all dogs, older than 3 months of age MUST be vaccinated against the rabies virus (State law allows the use of 1-year and 3-year vaccines).

Can you test titers immediately after vaccinating? To get an accurate test, you must wait at least 14 days after vaccination before testing.

It is vital to note, since titer testing only checks the current level of immunity in your dog and your dog's immune response can be altered by illness or disease (infection, internal parasites etc.) please be aware if your dog becomes ill for any reason, you will be required to have the titer testing done again, for reentry into the Alpha K9 U campus/facility. Thank you!

**Different Types of Titer Tests and the Potential for Conflicting Results*