

Reconsidering Routine Needle Replacement



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Takeaway: Sagaser et al. (JAVMA 2026) found no difference in heart rate or reaction scores between dogs vaccinated with a replaced needle versus the original draw-up needle. Injectors couldn't reliably identify which needle was new—and guessed correctly less often than a coin flip. The biology behind it isn't species-specific. *Note: The study assessed single vial passes only. Use clinical judgment for reconstituted vaccines with two or more passages through a vial.*

Three questions to discuss with your team

1

What is needle replacement doing for our animals?

What does the evidence suggest? What does your experience suggest? What would you observe if you tried skipping it for single-vial vaccines?

2

What are possible tradeoffs?

How many vaccines/needles per day? What does recovered time make possible? How often do needlestick incidents occur during recapping?

3

What would it take to try it?

If your team decides to try it, use this sample language for your SOP or work aid. "For single-vial vaccines, needle replacement after draw-up is not required. For reconstituted vaccines, use clinical judgment for 2+ vial passes. Updated [date] based on Sagaser et al., JAVMA 2026."

What we know makes an impact on animal comfort: Fear Free handling

- Offer high-value treats as a distraction
- Read body language
- Choose injection sites based on animal comfort
- Pet the area, then inject quickly
- Record which vaccine was given where

Add these steps to your intake and vaccine clinic SOPs. For free training in low-stress and fear-reduction techniques, check out our Shelter Care Specialist Certification Program and the Fear Free Shelter Program.



Shelter Care
Specialist
Certification