

Protect the Pets: The Movement Against Pet Over-Vaccination and Toxicosis:

A Special Interview With Dr. John Robb

By Dr. Karen Becker

KB: Dr. Karen Becker

JR: Dr. John Robb

KB: Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker. Today I have a very special guest joining me. I have Dr. John Robb, who is a veterinarian of – How many years, Dr. Robb, have you been a veterinarian?

JR: Thirty-two years.

KB: Thirty-two years. Dr. Robb – many of you know who he is. He is world-famous as of this year. We'll explain why in just a minute. Before we talk about the trials and tribulations of what you've been through recently, John, let's back up and talk about life before controversy. Let's talk about your background in terms of where you went to vet school, and then the practices that you were involved with.

JR: Thanks, Karen. I'd be glad to. I went to vet school at University of California, Davis (UC Davis) from 1981 to 1985. Excellent school. They gave me a good education – at least I felt at the time. Then I did a one-year internship, a private practice internship in New Haven, Connecticut at New Haven Central Veterinary Hospital.

It's true I've come in the public eye more recently. But honestly, Karen, I've been fighting to be a veterinarian my whole career. The drive for profits in veterinary medicine has really become a problem, especially with the advent of companies like Veterinary Centers of America (VCA) and the Mars Company coming in and owning veterinary hospitals. These are businessmen and businesswomen. These are people that want to make profits but don't necessarily have the best interest of the pets involved.

Unfortunately, the veterinary establishment, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and other organizations, seem to be joining forces instead of putting their hands up and saying, "We have a problem here."

Ever since New Haven Central – My first experience was my first night on, overnight, where a dog was hit on the side of the road. It was brought in by the technician who left. It was in pretty bad shape. I was supposed to put it to sleep. That's what I was told if it's injured. But then it opened its eyes and looked at me. I looked at him and then I worked all night to save the dog's life. I was in big trouble in the morning because I had spent a lot of money and there was no owner. I kind of knew at that point that it wasn't really about the pets.

Fortunately in that case, through a newspaper article, we found the owner. He reunited and sang praises for New Haven Central. I was off the hot seat. But I learned that there's a big thing about

money here that supersedes our caring for the pets. From there, it's been a problem all the way through, particularly the vaccine issue.

Many have come before me and understand that we're over-vaccinating pets and overdosing them. But for whatever reason now, it's come to the limelight. Now, in terms of the reason I came to the limelight, Karen, it's because of the Mars Candy Bar Company.

I've owned and operated three veterinary facilities. The first was a standalone practice, which I sold to VCA. The second was a 24-hour emergency care facility. The third was a Banfield, a franchise. Mars Candy Bar Company came in and bought Banfield. They're a very controlling company. They didn't want doctors making decisions. They wanted to tell doctors what to do. They defranchised. They got rid of all 250 hospitals. But they played hardball, "If you don't do what we say, we'll go after your license." That's what they did to me, Karen.

KB: Back up, John, and talk about how did that process unfold. First of all, you touched on so many issues. Part of the reason – I knew I would be an integrative veterinarian, so I came out. I was the holistic doctor in a very conventional practice for a couple of years. I couldn't deal with that. Because on my day off, Wednesdays, I would be treating my cancer patients integratively, and they would come in for a little bout of nausea on my day off and they'd be vaccinated.

I left that practice because they were vaccinating my cancer patients. I set up my own hospital, of course. But for those of us veterinarians that don't have the ability to just up and get angry and set up their own practice like I did, thousands of veterinarians are stuck using protocols that they don't personally believe in, but they're dictated. How did this go down, John? How did this confrontation over vaccines happen?

JR: Right. Like you said, I was taught, coming out of vet school, that vaccines were good. You just vaccinate and it prevented disease. That sounded great to me. But unfortunately, I started to see side effects. I started to see anaphylaxis. I started to see more long-term sequelae.

I began to read the veterinary literature, like the JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association. I started to research on my own. I came across veterinarians who had been showing that vaccines caused a lot of serious side effects, including hemolytic anemia and cancer of the injection sites, etc. I had a problem now. I'm a veterinarian, and I'm hurting my patients with these vaccines.

I decided to change things. I started lengthening the time between vaccines. I started lowering my volume, because it was very clear to me that the small pets could not handle the same volume as the big pets. When I got the Banfield – they're so into over-vaccination. I put protocols in place to stop them. That protocol was "smaller dogs receive a lower volume." Also, we only gave one vaccine per visit. Also, I didn't give all the vaccines they specified.

Mars then bought Banfield. They basically came in and they said, "Look, we want your franchise back. In fact, we're buying all the franchises back. We control the doctors. We're going to give about a third of what it's worth and you're going to leave. Maybe you can go open up another

hospital.” I said, “I’m not going anywhere. I have 15 years left on my contract. You can’t tell me how to practice veterinary medicine. That’s my job, so get out.”

They went ahead and took my franchise. They had me arrested. They did what they said they would do. They said if I didn’t go easy, they would report me to the State Board, because I was lowering my volume and they said it was against the law. And so they did. They reported me to the State Board of Connecticut. Now, it’s a whole other thing. First, I had to go back and warn my clients, because they sent a letter out to all 5,000 of my clients, saying none of their pets were

KB: Protected. Yeah.

JR: —protected. I knew all they need to do was do a titer test and they would show protection. I went back to warn my clients, because they’re still my clients and those are still my patients.

KB: Of course.

JR: They put armed guards, armed guards, in front of all the PetSmarts in Connecticut. Two sets, one PetSmart paid for one Mars. They made a big scene. They brought in doctors from other places, employees from other places. They started to say I was making the scene, when they created the big tumultuous situation to say to the police officers, “This guy is nuts.”

The first time, they handcuffed me to a stretcher and took me to the psych ward. The second time I went back, they arrested me. I’m just trying to hand out literature to do a titer and not revaccinate the dog without doing that, because I knew my pets were protected. I had done titers and I knew it.

It ended up in federal court. They lied to the judge and said, “We were offering titers.” They did everything they could not to do a titer. They injured so many pets, some died, because they revaccinated all of them. That’s how they wanted to cover up the crime, in other words. I was vaccinating correctly and they didn’t want anybody to see that their pets had immunity.

This fight with Mars [happened] in front of the State Board. That was the craziest thing. I brought in all the scientific articles to my State Board in Connecticut. They told me that they didn’t care about science. These are veterinarians. They don’t care about science. I broke the law. Even if I have to kill my patient, I have to obey the law. I said, “You guys are crazy. I mean, you’re crazy. What are you saying?”

This is the state of where veterinary medicine has gotten to, where we have a mandated rabies law, where we could take a simple blood test and find out that they don’t need the shot. We veterinarians are in bondage now, forced to injure our patients. Then you’ve got Mars coming in and trying to control veterinarians as their resource.

Karen, I thank God that you’re standing up. I thank God other veterinarians are standing up, because most veterinarians want to do the right thing, but they’re scared to death about their license and repercussions.

KB: Rightfully so, John. They promised they would make an example of you, and they did. But, John, the silver lining in the horrific circumstances that you've been through is that – As integrative practitioners, we've been screaming. For 20 years, we were overdoing it, no one's listening. In fact, they think all of us are crazy nut jobs because we're preaching titers.

The most interesting thing about titers is – you remember going to vet school. I was vaccinated at 13 years of age for rabies because I was a wildlife rehabilitator. When I went to vet school, they titered me. They said, “No, no, no. You've already been vaccinated. You have to be titered.” I said, “Okay. So you'll titer me, but we won't extend the same courtesy to dogs and cats.” That's right. Because they're different, right? Dogs and cats are different than people. It comes back to the almighty dollar.

But honestly, the silver lining is you have effected change, Dr. Robb. Your case, as painful as this entire thing has been, you are effecting change. For that, I am forever grateful.

Talk to me about some of the amazing things that have happened out of this really public case of you standing up and saying, “I am not going to. I am not going to harm animals. I took an oath not to, and I will not.” What has happened out of your difficult circumstances? What are some of the benefits that you are now seeing coming into place?

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JR: Thanks, Karen. Yes. My wife and I actually started the Protect the Pets Movement in 2006. We took all our retirement money and we put it into the movement. It was never to make money, but it was to bring morality back into veterinary medicine. That was good because I had a track record going into this, of already trying to stand up for the rights of the pets and the people who own them, and the veterinarians, okay? Basically, what's come out of it is I've gotten on to a worldwide screen.

Because I was willing to put my license on the line and all my resources to do what I love best, which is being a veterinarian and protecting my patients, this has become a movement of the heart. What's happened is people are joining me. I don't look at it as me at all. I look at it as you, Karen, and all the people who have been fighting these issues for years, finally getting to a tipping point, that we're working together.

But what's happening is, you see, the people were isolated. The people whose pets were being injured and dying were isolated. They had no voice. They've been told that it wasn't the shot. Even though four hours after the shot, my pet is blind and seizing when he was fine going in, it wasn't the shot. It just was epilepsy coming on. Or when they started bleeding internally and it was hemolytic anemia, it wasn't the shot. Or when there were tumors right on the right hip where they got that injection, it wasn't the shot. But now, they had somebody who was visible in the public saying, “It was the shot.”

They've come on board to tell their stories. Because, as you know, Karen, it's not legally required for veterinarians to report adverse events. Therefore, there's no real log of it. Those in the veterinary establishment, the AVMA, AAHA and those associated with it, just want to say –

I mean there was a veterinarian testifying when the legislators were proposing this bill in Connecticut who said, “I never heard of a vaccine reaction.”

KB: I know.

JR: I mean this is a veterinarian.

KB: I know.

JR: You know what I’m saying? You know what I wanted to do, which I didn’t do. But the point is, now that people are coming forward and now that we can see the evidence, you, the people, are the ones that are driving this change, because you have had enough. We veterinarians, like Karen, myself and others, are going to work with you to amend the rabies law and bring morality back into a profession gone wrong. People, like Mars Candy Bar Company, who think they could come in and victimize your pet for profits, are going to be rudely awakened, because we, the people, control them. Because we spend money and we decide where we’re going to spend it.

KB: That’s right.

JR: We have the power here. We just have to unite. That’s the bottom line here. We are uniting now.

KB: You have seen drops turn into little ripples, which are turning into really big waves of people listening and paying attention. You are doing a great job of bringing to light the elephant in the room in our profession.

JR: Right.

KB: People are finally paying attention. Now, of course, the vaccine issue is one of the most hotly debated topics in veterinary medicine.

JR: Right.

KB: But you hit the nail on the head. It’s the people spending the money. People have a choice over where they spend their dollars when it comes to veterinary medicine, and how they choose to spend their money – whether they do a titer or whether they go to a different veterinarian, whether they choose to associate with a corporately-run veterinary practice that has protocols that they will not budge on. Pet parents are in complete control of how they’re going to participate, even passively, by how you’re spending your money.

Dr. Robb, give us some suggestions if people have been through the pain of a vaccine reaction. Keep in mind – Dr. Robb hit the nail on the head – this could be anything from acute anaphylaxis. I have had patients, clients who have brought home a puppy. There was a free vet visit included with the purchase of their puppy, and those puppies have anaphylaxed and died on the table. Veterinarians say it has nothing to do with the vaccine. It’s asinine. It’s asinine.

JR: Karen, let me just say one thing about anaphylaxis just to show you how much this is being covered up. The 2005 study, which I know you're aware of, that address events within the first 72 hours of vaccines with dogs. One of the chief investigators in that was Karen Faunt, who's also one of the medical directors at Banfield. They showed that reactions were higher for smaller pets, and multiple vaccines cause more reactions. But in the end, they concluded that vaccines were safe.

What they didn't include in this study, which because I had her under deposition at court of law, I said to her, "Why didn't you include in your study the dogs that died of anaphylaxis? Certainly, that was within the first 72 hours." I'm telling you her jaw dropped. Because it turns out that there were six animals that died of anaphylaxis and they didn't put them in the study. They concluded they were safe. It's beyond me that they could do that and conclude they're safe when animals died.

KB: It is. Yeah.

JR: We're on a mission here. It is we the people. We do choose where we stand. People have to stand up. For too long, people felt they had no power.

KB: Yes.

JR: I understand it when they were just one, but we're not just one anymore. We are a worldwide movement. We've had veterinarians join the movement, certainly had owners join the movement, and just humanitarian people joining the movement. We're not stopping.

Even while we're doing this conversation, you and I both know there are pets out there that are being injured, dying and being given injections they don't need, right this minute. There is no time to waste, folks. Lives depend on education, encouraging each other and taking action steps, contacting your legislators. If you look me up on Facebook, John Robb, I'm trying to keep it centralized, but we have now 20 states – Protect the Pets New York, Protect the Pets Iowa.

KB: Nice.

JR: We've got organizations. We're putting together the science so we can quickly go off to a legislator. We're not just sitting here speaking, but we're taking action steps towards changing the amended rabies law.

So first, we have to educate. Educate legislators, educate pet owners, unsuspecting pet owners that are heading in for a shot that can kill their pet. Somebody's got to hand them a pamphlet and say, "Listen. We've got a problem here." We've got to reach those people. Then they have to become part of this movement.

I so appreciate, Karen, you recognizing where my heart is, and allowing us to work together on your program – and people like Rodney Habib, the wonderful man from Canada who developed that video that went to almost 20 million people. We have the power, but we have to stay united. It's not about political parties or race. It's about the pets. Everybody owns them, and everybody

needs to put all their differences aside and keep on target here to amend the rabies law. That's the deal.

KB: Dr. Robb, [where] is the best place for people to go to get more information? Is it your website or Facebook page? How can people learn more?

JR: Listen, first of all, I'll put out my phone number: 203-731-4251. You can call me. You can go to my email, which is on my website. I have a website called ProtectThePets.com. You can contact me through my email. You can go to Facebook. You can just get involved with a thread. Say, "Dr. Robb, call me."

I mean people think that I'm so popular, that I can't talk to people. Baloney. This movement is about you, and I want to talk to you. I want to know what your situation is, because you're no bigger than me, and I'm no bigger than you. We work together. I need to hear people's voices, to see their situations, to see what their talents are.

KB: Yeah.

JR: And see where they want to be part of the movement. Contact me any way you can. There are other people involved, like yourself, Karen, who will take part of the load in terms of taking that information and putting it into a precise, powerful force to amend the rabies law. That's what we're going after first. Because once we make that crack, once we crack into that veterinary establishment, we show that we the people control veterinary medicine.

KB: Yeah.

JR: There are 200 million of us. There are 40,000 of them.

KB: Right.

JR: We control them.

KB: We are capable, as pet parents, of making wise decisions for the animals we're caring for.

JR: Yes.

KB: We are the decision makers for the animals in our homes. It's not your veterinarian's choice. It's your choice. You're the parent.

The other big point I think that we need to make here is, guys, a lot of people say, "Oh my gosh. You're anti-vaccine." Guys, there's a huge difference between over-vaccination and protective vaccines. We're not talking about never vaccinating your pet for anything ever. We're talking about wisely protecting with minimal and well-made choice for protection for puppies and kittens, and then titering for a lifetime after that.

JR: Perfect.

KB: I think it's really very important to make that distinction. Because people say, "Oh my gosh. You're saying never vaccinate your dog for anything. All these diseases will come back." Guys, there's a big difference between protective immunity and toxicosis. What Dr. Robb is talking about is that you don't have to bring your dog or cat in every year for nine vaccines. They don't magically wear off at midnight on December 31st.

Some of these vaccines are substantially more toxic than others. It is your job to know enough about what we're discussing to be able to make the best decisions for the animals you're caring for. But if your veterinarian refuses to respect your opinion and your vantage point, find a new vet. Right, Dr. Robb?

JR: Karen, you're right on. I'm glad you brought in that point about we're not anti-vax. We're not. The job of the veterinarians is to vaccinate to produce immunity with the smallest volume and the smallest number of vaccines to produce that immunity. Once the dog is immune, we're done.

KB: We're done.

JR: That's all we're saying. It's once they've developed immunity, [it's] easily measured by a titer. I'm sticking with rabies, parvo and distemper.

KB: Parvo and distemper. Yep, you bet.

JR: That's what I'm sticking with, those three.

KB: Yep.

JR: Once we have the titer, they're immune. As we're speaking, I know you've had Dr. Ronald Schultz. You've done a wonderful job of bringing key people together. But I was speaking to Dr. Schultz yesterday, and he's helping us. He's in favor of the titers, as you know. He's been trying to get this forward for a long time. He pointed out to me that rabies is the worst of all the vaccines in terms of toxic reactions, okay? Even more important to pinpoint the rabies.

Many veterinarians are now doing distemper parvo titers and then not vaccinating. It's about 20 percent or 25 percent, but it's a substantial number. But many owners, like you said, they go into the vet right now and they ask for a titer and the vet says, "It's illegal for me to draw a rabies titer."

KB: I know.

JR: That's what they tell them.

KB: I know. Or it's 500 bucks. They make it so economically painful.

JR: That's it. Right now, I have a special – I call this special – But basically, I'm charging 32 dollars for a rabies titer and 54 [dollars] for all four for anybody who can get them. Now, some people have gone to their vet and they'll draw the blood for 6 dollars and 50 cents, other people with 65 dollars. Find a vet that's going to be reasonable and will help you with that area. But the price will come down as it becomes the standard.

KB: Yeah.

JR: We know that. Supply and demand.

KB: That's awesome. I just want to highlight again. What Dr. Robb is saying is that you can do a parvo, distemper and rabies titer together for – what's the cost, Dr. Robb?

JR: Fifty-four dollars. Fifty-hour bucks.

KB: That's amazing. At this point, that's awesome that you have worked together to get the price down to that point. At this point, guys, it's so well worth spending your latte fund on your titer fund right now, because 54 dollars is a very small price to pay to ensure that your pets are protected without offering any additional toxicosis. That's brilliant. That's wonderful, because all the veterinarians say, "Well, it's 500 dollars." Not through you, Dr. Robb.

For anyone who's looking to complete this blood test that measures previous immunity, check out Dr. Robb's Facebook page, website, as well as – You actually are doing a lot of other interviews with a lot of other platforms, which is wonderful. You're doing everything you can to get the word out.

JR: That's the key. It's to reach people and educate. This is over when we reach that key number of people, Karen.

KB: Yeah.

JR: Your program is going to add a big segment to that population because of your popularity in terms of people trusting you. That's why I thank you for having me on the show, because that trust that they have for you hopefully will extend to me, and we can continue together to educate, encourage and take action so that we pass this law.

KB: Yes.

JR: Let's face it. Each person needs to be judged based on themselves. I don't classify veterinarians. We know there are some vets who own hospitals who don't know how they're going to survive if the rabies isn't mandated. We know there are the corporate ones who don't care. They just want to drive people in the door. But we have mostly associate veterinarians who are in bondage to this system.

KB: Yup.

JR: That's really the problem.

KB: You're right.

JR: We want to free them to practice veterinary from a heart perspective. That's what this movement is about. Lots of layers, Karen. I mean look at the suicide rate, Karen, in veterinary medicine.

KB: Yup.

JR: It's crazy.

KB: It is.

JR: Four times. Because they have to go against their heart and injure animals.

KB: Yup.

JR: This is inhumane.

KB: Yeah.

JR: It blows my mind when I really think that you have these innocent creatures and somebody knows what they're doing and allows this to continue. But we the people are going to stop it. It stops now.

KB: I appreciate your passion, Dr. Robb. I am heartbroken over your previous circumstances, but the beautiful universal gift is out of this difficulty.

Professionally, you have opened this topic wide open, to which I am forever thankful, because it's something that I'm not sure would have happened without these cataclysmic events of you going nose to nose and toe to toe with your State Boards and then going nationwide, and now worldwide, in bringing attention to this critically important topic. I appreciate everything you're doing.

JR: Yeah. I'm going to say one last thing about the worldwide. It is worldwide, Karen, because we may set the standards in this country, and then other countries adopt them. There are pets in Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan and all these places. We want to reach all of them too. I just want the viewers to know I don't care what country. We'll start Protect the Pets England and Protect the Pets France. We are going to go wherever pets are being victimized and the pet parents. We're going to set them free. That's what this is all about.

KB: Thank you, Dr. John Robb.

JR: Okay. Thank you, Karen.

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