

# FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS AND FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

**Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) are viruses that affect cats only.** These viruses are somewhat similar to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in people; cats infected with FeLV or FIV develop severely compromised immune systems.

Infected cats can appear perfectly normal but will usually die within a few years of overwhelming infections or certain types of cancer. The viruses are transmitted by close cat to cat contact such as mutual grooming and bite wounds. Kittens born to an infected mother can be infected before birth or through their mother's milk. Fortunately, **a simple blood test can tell us if a cat or kitten is carrying one of these viruses.**



## FeLV/FIV Testing

**Who? All new cats or kittens entering a household should be tested.** This is particularly important if you have other cats at home that could potentially be at risk of being exposed. New cats should be kept separate from other cats in a home until the FeLV/FIV status of the cats is known.

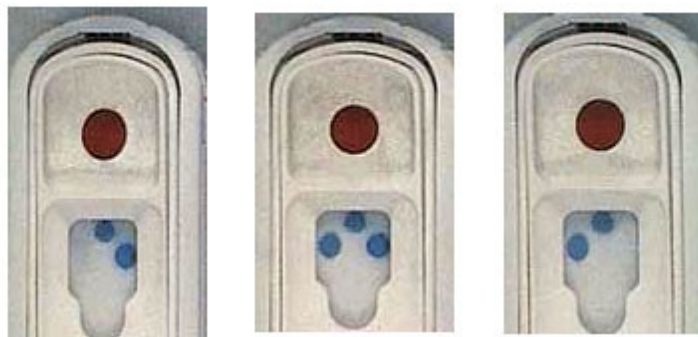
Any cat with chronic, unexplained disease and any cat with significant dental disease should be tested too.

**What? A screening test (ELISA) for FeLV/FIV can be performed on a small blood sample from your cat. Results are generally available within 48 hours.**

**When?** Ideally, testing should be done as soon as possible after acquiring the new kitten or cat. Samples may be obtained during a routine office appointment such as a "Health Check" or vaccination appointment. In some cases, we may ask you to leave your cat with us for a short while during the day if we need more time to obtain the sample.

**Why?** FeLV/FIV are devastating diseases for cats. While there is no cure, early diagnosis can help us keep affected cats as healthy as possible for as long as possible. More important however, is that early diagnosis can help prevent the spread of the virus to other cats.

FeLV Positive    FeLV and FIV Positive    FIV Positive



**Since it is impossible to tell if a cat or kitten is infected with one of these viruses just by looking at them (or by looking at the mother cat), we recommend that EVERY new cat or kitten entering a household be tested for FeLV or FIV.**





# FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS VACCINATION



An effective vaccination is widely used to protect cats against Feline Leukemia Virus. It offers good protection if the cat is at risk of being exposed to the virus in the future, it will not however help a cat who is already infected. This vaccine is not always part of the \*core\* vaccines that we give cats and you must let us know if you want your cat to have it.

## Who should be vaccinated for Feline Leukemia Virus?:

Any cat who has the potential to be in direct contact with other cats whose FeLV/FIV status is not known i.e.:

- cats who go outdoors on a regular basis
- \*indoor\* cats who might sneak out on occasion
- if you \*babysit\* or foster other cats
- if you have another cat at home whose FeLV/FIV status is not known or if you are planning on acquiring another cat

## When should my Kitten/Cat be vaccinated for Feline Leukemia Virus:

Initially, kittens or cats should receive two FeLV boosters (needles) given one month apart and then receive a booster annually. These boosters are usually given at the same time as the other core vaccines (i.e. FVRCP and Rabies).

It is important to perform a blood test (FeLV/FIV test) on all cats and kittens before vaccinating them against Feline Leukemia for the first time because the vaccine will not help a cat who already has the virus in its system. The vaccine can only protect the cat from becoming infected with the virus in the future.