

do not introduce disease to the tom-cat.

How do I protect against FeLV?

There are several vaccines available against FeLV which can provide 95-100% protection. Two doses of vaccine are given 2-3 weeks apart, and this should begin at about 9 weeks old, when cats are most vulnerable. After that, an annual booster is given to keep your cat's immunity high.

The vaccines are very safe and can be given at the same time as the cat flu and enteritis vaccinations.

From May 2001, we routinely include protection against FeLV in our cat vaccination programme—unless you do not want it.

If you have any questions about Feline Leukaemia Virus, please contact the surgery and we will be happy to discuss them with you.

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Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)



This is one of a series of information handouts written by our vets and nurses for our clients and their pets

Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) - what is it?

Feline leukaemia virus is an important and serious disease of all types of cat. When it infects a cat, it can affect any part of the body, resulting in a number of different illnesses. Among the problems it can cause are:

- Tumours & cancer—FeLV is responsible for 1/3 of all cancers in cats
- Anaemia
- Abscesses
- Gum disease
- Gastro-enteritis
- Infertility
- Eye disease

Sadly, these illnesses invariably progress to cause death.

How is it spread?

The virus is found mainly in the saliva of an infected (virus positive) cat and may be transmitted to your cat by licking, biting or shar-

ing a food bowl. Any kittens born to a virus positive cat will also be carriers of the virus, although more often the virus will cause mum to abort before reaching this stage.

It has been estimated that three-quarters of all cats will come across the virus at some stage of their lives. Fortunately, a lot of cats fight it off, and become immune. Those that do not will often appear healthy in the early stages, but 85% will develop disease and die within 3 years.

How do I know if my cat is infected?

The first signs will be one of the illnesses previously mentioned. You will often see your cat become lethargic and a bit off their food. Typically, your cat will not respond to treatment which we would normally expect to work if the illness was not caused by the FeLV virus.

At this point, we can do a blood test to check for the virus. Only a few drops of blood are needed, and we can give you the results the same day to keep that awful waiting to a minimum.

Is there any treatment?

No. The disease is invariably fatal, although the length of time this takes will depend on which part of the body has been affected. By the time your cat has become ill it may only be a matter of days. Your cat should be kept indoors to avoid infecting other local cats.

What about other cats in contact?

Other cats in your household can be blood tested to see if they have the virus. Some cats will fight off the virus and will not develop any disease, so it is not always bad news for the others. Cats less than six months old are most at risk.

Cats with a positive blood test will usually be retested a month or two later to see if they have fought off the virus or it has established itself in their body.

Pedigree cats going to a stud tomcat for mating will usually be tested for FeLV before they go, to ensure they