

**What every Feline Family should know:**

# Vaccines & Deworming

Many veterinary hospitals have different vaccine protocols. We recommend two core vaccines for cats and kittens:

- 1) Distemper (FVRCP) vaccine
- 2) Rabies vaccine.
- 3) (optional) Feline leukemia vaccine for cats who spend time outdoors



## Distemper (FVRCP) vaccine

The distemper (FVRCP) vaccine protects kittens and cats against the most serious upper respiratory diseases: feline rhinotracheitis, calici virus and panleukopenia. We use an **intranasal** vaccine in which a few drops are applied to each nostril; no injection is involved. Since upper respiratory viruses enter through the nose, the vaccine is applied directly to that area. Your kitten will receive the vaccine about every 3 weeks until he/she is 4 months of age.

You may notice some sneezing after your kitten receives the vaccine – it should be a clear, wet sneeze that may last up to 7 days. Notify your veterinarian if the sneezing doesn't end within a week, if you notice a green or yellow discharge, or if your kitten has a decrease in appetite.

## Rabies Vaccine

The rabies vaccine is recommended in accordance to laws set by the State of Michigan along with local city ordinances. Since rabies is a serious human health risk, it's important to keep your cat up to date to cover potential legal problems since most human rabies cases come from domestic animals and pets. If a cat is overdue for a rabies vaccine and bites someone, by law, a police report must be filed, and the cat must be quarantined at a shelter or vet clinic for 10 days. Rabies cases are up, especially in cats.

Another reason to get your cat vaccinated for rabies is that even indoor-only cats can be exposed to rabies by a mouse or a bat that enters the home.

We use the PureVax® feline rabies vaccine which has been proven to be safe for cats due to the absence of certain additives called adjuvants, which have been linked to vaccine-associated tumors at the vaccine site (occurrence rate is about 1 in 10,000 vaccinated cats). This injectable vaccine is given annually in the right rear leg, just under the skin. A small lump may be observed under the skin for a few weeks, but should not persist past 2- 3 months. The risk of the rabies virus outweighs any complications that could arise from the vaccine.

## Feline Leukemia (FeLV) Vaccine

We recommend the feline leukemia (FeLV) vaccine for cats who spend any time outdoors. A cat could be exposed to FeLV by walking in grass that an infected cat has urinated on, and then grooming itself; by sharing food bowls or litter boxes, or by bite wounds. Cats under age 10 are at increased risk of picking up the virus. Older cats are less likely to become infected, because of their retained immunity. Your veterinarian will ask you about your cat's lifestyle before you make a decision about whether or not your cat should get the vaccine.

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The first time a cat is vaccinated for feline leukemia, a second vaccination follows 3- 4 weeks later. Thereafter, the FeLV vaccine is given annually.

### ***Feline Leukemia (FeLV) Vaccine (con't)***

The Cat Practice uses the PureVax® feline leukemia vaccine, which is very safe. It's given through a device that shoots the vaccine under the skin with a puff of air so no needle is necessary. The device makes a loud popping sound as the vaccine is delivered, so some cats may react to the noise. This method of giving vaccines is becoming more popular, especially in humane medicine.

### **Parasites and Deworming**

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Most kittens are infected soon after birth, through their mother's milk, even when the mother cat is negative for intestinal parasites. Dormant parasite eggs often become active on the 42nd day of pregnancy, reinfesting the mother, and then infecting the kittens through the milk. So it's assumed that every kitten has some type of intestinal parasite.

The most common intestinal parasite in kittens and cats is roundworms, which are usually microscopic, but can sometimes be seen in stools or vomit. Kittens with roundworms usually have a bloated, round belly, and a dull hair coat. Roundworms can strip a small kitten of nutrients needed to grow and develop properly.

Dewormer is given orally. A second deworming is done 3- 4 weeks later, since parasite eggs often survive and now have become adults. A stool sample should be checked for additional parasites that the dewormer may not have killed, such as specific protozoa. We recommend checking a stool sample on all cats (even indoor-only cats) annually since cats can pick up roundworms or hookworms through infected soil, and tapeworms from fleas or eating mice. Cats that spend any time outdoors should be dewormed every 4 -6 months.

Some parasites can be transferred to humans, including roundworms and hookworms. Homes with small children (who may accidentally get into the litter box) should be especially diligent about preventative deworming and checking stool samples. Scoop out the litter box at least daily to reduce the possibility of any parasite eggs becoming active and infecting another cat or a person.

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