

FELINE VACCINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Why do our cats and kittens need vaccinations?

Vaccinating your cat or kitten will help protect them from many common infectious diseases which could cause serious illness or even death. These vaccines prepare the immune system for fighting off contagious viruses and bacteria. If you are thinking about boarding your cat or kitten, most facilities require all pets to be up to date on their vaccinations to ensure the safety of all pets staying at the facility.

Which vaccinations do our cats and kittens need?

Woodinville Veterinary Hospital promotes customized vaccine protocols for our patients, depending on the potential exposure and lifestyle of each individual pet.

FVRCP (Upper respiratory)

This vaccine is recommended for all cats and kittens, as the viruses are transmitted through the air.

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis: A viral respiratory disease. Also referred to as feline herpes.

Calici: A viral respiratory disease.

Panleukopenia: A viral gastrointestinal disease which is very serious and often fatal. This virus is the feline equivalent to canine parvovirus.

This vaccine is typically given to kittens as a series of two or three vaccines, then again one year later, then every three years.

Rabies (ZONOTIC – transmissible to humans)

This vaccine is legally required by King County for all dogs and cats. This disease is a virus that causes severe neurological disease and certain death in all mammals – dogs, cats, livestock, bats, and wildlife. Rabies is also transmissible to people, usually via bite wounds or contact with saliva, resulting in human death. In the event that your pet bites someone, proof of vaccination against this virus will help protect you, your family, and your pet.

Rabies is given first to kittens at 3-4 months old, then every year.

FeLV (Feline Leukemia)

Feline leukemia is a virus that is transmitted between cats by prolonged, close contact such as grooming, sharing food and water bowls, and bite wounds. It can also be transmitted from a female cat to her kittens during pregnancy or nursing. This disease causes severe immunosuppression, which decreases the cat's ability to fight off any other virus or bacteria. It can also cause a variety of bone marrow cancers and is almost always fatal in persistent infections. Testing for this disease is recommended for any cat or kitten with an unknown vaccine history, and yearly for cats that have

access to the outdoors. Feline leukemia can be carried by cats and kittens for years with no clinical signs of illness.

This vaccine is typically given only to cats and kittens that will be allowed to go outside. Kittens receive a series of two vaccines, then a booster every year. For strictly indoor only cats, we do not recommend this vaccine.

FIV (Feline AIDS) – NOT RECOMMENDED

FIV is very similar to HIV in humans, in that it causes severe immune system suppression and is potentially fatal. It is transmitted via bite wounds, in the saliva, and can also be transmitted from female cats to their kittens during pregnancy. Cats often carry this virus for years without having clinical signs of illness, and often their lives are ended by some other disease process.

We recommend testing for this virus for any cat or kitten with unknown vaccine history, and yearly for cats with access to the outdoors.

There is a vaccine available for this virus, but we do not recommend it as it provides a very low level of protection. In addition, once a cat has received the vaccine, the cat will test positive for FIV and there is currently no way of determining which cats have been vaccinated and which cats are truly infected.

FELINE VACCINE-ASSOCIATED SARCOMAS

Vaccine associated sarcomas are a cancer that can form at the site of injections in cats, particularly at vaccine sites. These tumors are malignant and extremely aggressive, invading the surrounding tissue, and can be fatal. Although there have been massive amounts of research on this disease, the exact cause of these tumors is yet to be determined.

However, they have been associated with specific components of certain vaccines. So far, the sarcomas have been associated with the feline leukemia and rabies vaccines, but not with the FVRCP vaccine. The tumors occur in approximately one in every 10,000 cats that receive injections.

Woodinville Veterinary Hospital has adopted several recommended strategies to prevent these tumors. We use a recombinant rabies vaccine and a relatively new form of feline leukemia vaccine that is delivered through the skin without a needle. Both of these vaccines were developed with the goal of preventing sarcomas, and have had few to zero reported cases of the tumors. In addition, we administer the vaccines in the lower part of the leg to facilitate surgical removal should a tumor form.

For more information on this disease, please visit the following website from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Vaccine Associated Feline Sarcoma Task Force

<http://www.avma.org/vafstf/>