

VACCINE GUIDE - Feline



DEDHAM
VETERINARY ASSOCIATES

We follow vaccination guidelines from the American Animal Hospital Association, American Association of Feline Practitioners and the International Society of Feline Medicine. These are considered to be the most trusted authorities on feline medicine and vaccines.

Many years ago it was discovered that some of the Feline Vaccines on the market were increasing the risk of cats developing a certain type of cancer, fibrosarcoma, often at the site of the vaccine. In order to work to provide immunity, vaccines must stimulate the immune system to make antibodies against the deadly disease. Researchers determined that some cats over-react to some ingredients in these vaccines that were being added to increase the immune system response to the vaccine. For some cats the reaction was too much and was increasing their risk of cancer. Through research and development there is now vaccine technology such that we can stimulate their immune systems enough to provide immunity from deadly feline diseases, while being gentle enough that the vaccines do not increase the risk of developing cancer. Today we are lucky to have very safe, gentle and effective vaccines for cats. These safe vaccines with the newest technology are the only vaccines we give to cats at our hospital.

Rabies

Rabies is fatal to cats, dogs and humans. It can be spread to our pets (and us) from tangling with wildlife, including- raccoons, bats, skunks and groundhogs. Rabies is so dangerous that by law all cats and dogs must be vaccinated. Kittens get their first dose when they are at least 12 weeks old, then a booster within 9-12 months. After that it is boosted every 1 or 3 years (depending on vaccine selected) by Massachusetts state law.

Feline Distemper Vaccine (FVRCP or FDRC)

This Vaccine Protects Against :

- Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV) - a fatal virus that is closely related to Parvovirus in dogs. The virus can live for many hours in the environment and is very contagious from cat to cat. Once the virus gets into the the body it attacks the GI tract and bone marrow, leading to severe illness and death.
- Feline Herpesvirus 1 (FHV-1) - a very contagious upper respiratory virus that spreads very rapidly from cat to cat, causing severe congestion, sneezing, conjunctivitis and lethargy. Some cats may develop chronic eye problems or recurrent disease. The virus can become latent and hide in nerves, then come out again at times of stress and cats can shed the virus intermittently when it comes out of hiding.
- Feline Calicivirus (FCV) - is a very contagious upper respiratory virus that often causes ulcerations of the tongue and mouth. Some strains cause just the upper respiratory signs and others can be much more severe, affecting joints and internal organs, which can be fatal. All strains are very contagious between cats or between a cat and any germs left in the environment from another cat.

Kittens get a dose of this vaccine every 3-4 weeks, starting at 6-8 weeks of age and receiving their final vaccine when they are at least 16-20 weeks old. The vaccine is then boosted at 1 year of age, then every 3 years thereafter. There is some new research that indicates that some kittens may benefit from a booster at 6 months of age instead of the 1 year booster. Your veterinarian will discuss your kitty's lifestyle with you and consider the best vaccine schedule for your kitty.

Feline Leukemia (FeLV)

Feline Leukemia Virus is a fatal virus that destroys the immune system. It is spread from cat to cat directly or via shared items in the environment such as food dishes. Kittens are especially susceptible to catching this fatal disease. A quick blood test is used to screen kittens for this disease before their first Feline Leukemia Vaccine. This test is repeated though adulthood in cats that have contact with the outdoors or cats that go outdoors.

Kittens are given two doses, 3-4 weeks apart, starting at 8 weeks of age. This vaccine is now recommended for all kittens, regardless if they will be allowed outdoors, because it is so contagious for young kitties. The vaccine is boosted at 1 year of age, and then yearly for cats that will go outdoors or be in contact with other cats that go outside.