

Feline Leukemia

What you need to Know!

What is Feline Leukemia?

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) is a virus that attacks and weakens a cat's immune system. FeLV infection may follow one of two pathways. In the first pathway, FeLV attacks tissues and organs of the immune system. This attack leaves the cat susceptible to a wide variety of infectious diseases. The second pathway is when the FeLV infection develops cancer in the form of tumors or leukemia. FeLV is the #1 infectious disease killer of cats and kills nearly 1 million cats yearly!

How do cats get infected with Feline Leukemia?

FeLV infection is passed from cat to cat. It is shed in saliva, urine, and feces. The virus is also transmitted through licking and biting. Infected pregnant cats can pass the virus to unborn kittens in the womb and to newborns, which are highly susceptible to the disease, through nursing and grooming. Food dishes and litter boxes can be a source of infection for healthy cats if they share them with infected cats.

How do I know if my cat has this disease?

A simple blood test done by your veterinarian will give you a quick and accurate result. You can do this test as early as 8 weeks of age.

How can I protect my cat from this disease?

Minimizing contact with other cats is the best way to protect your cat. A cat is at risk of getting FeLV if they go outdoors, is in contact with other cats or is boarded when the owner is away. If your cat is at risk of contracting FeLV then vaccinating is highly recommended.

What happens to my cat if they get Feline Leukemia Virus?

If your cat is infected with FeLV it poses significant risk of exposure to other cats in the household plus any cats it may come into contact with. Because FeLV attacks and weakens the immune system, it leaves your cat open to a host of diseases such as respiratory infections, anemia, poor wound healing, cancer in the form of tumors or leukemia, and FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis). All of these diseases will potentially shorten a cat's life-span.