

# Feline Diseases & Vaccination



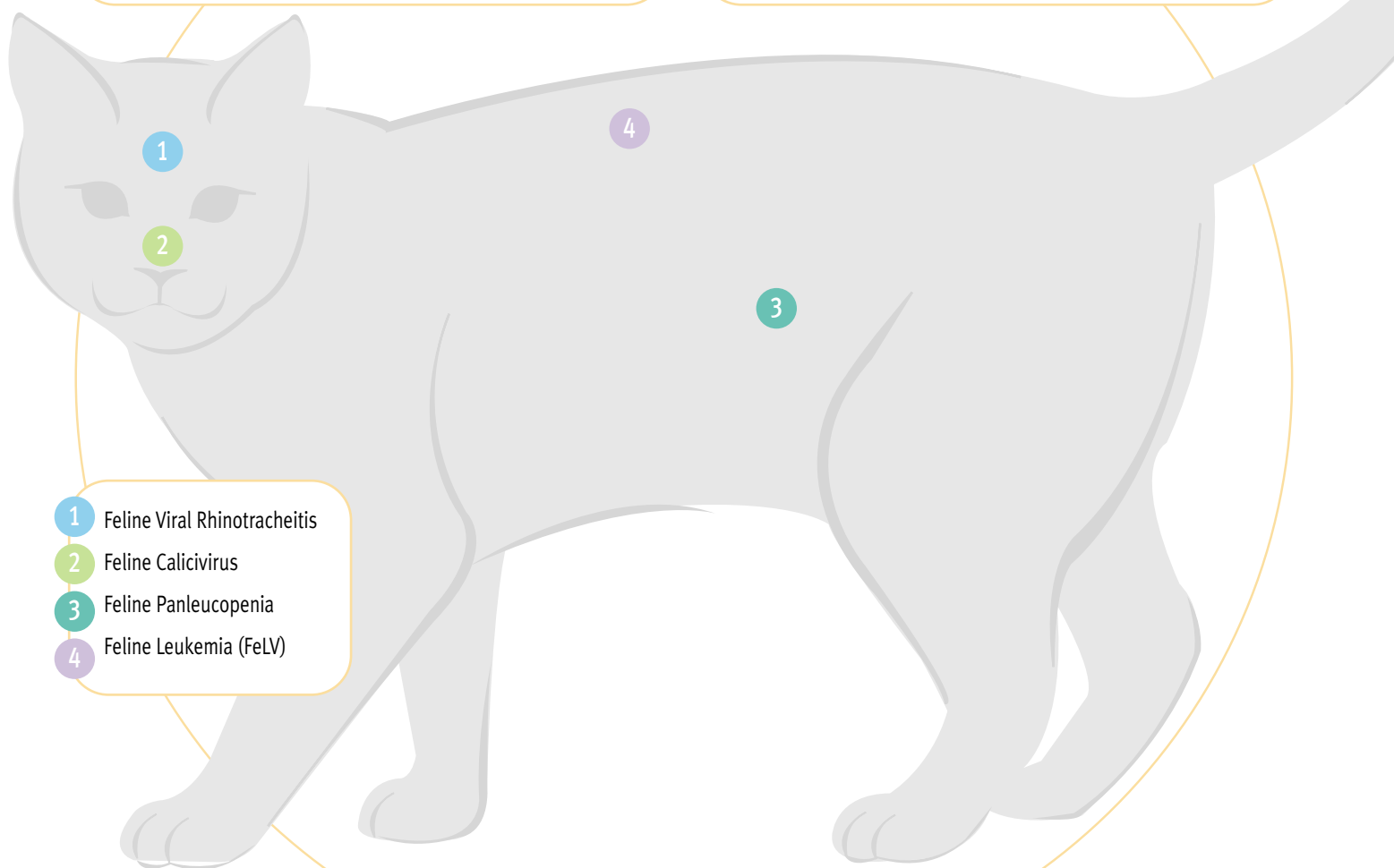
Special Care Instructions for \_\_\_\_\_

## Your cat counts on you for protection

One of the very best things you can do to give your cat a long and healthy life is to ensure that he/she is vaccinated against common feline diseases. Your cat's mother gave her kitten immunity from disease for the first few weeks of existence by providing disease-fighting antibodies in her milk. After that period it's up to you - with the help and advice of your veterinary surgeon - to provide that protection.

## How do vaccines work?

Vaccines contain small quantities of altered or "killed" viruses, bacteria or other disease-causing organisms. When administered, they stimulate your cat's immune system to produce disease-fighting cells and proteins - or antibodies - to protect against disease.



- 1 Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis
- 2 Feline Calicivirus
- 3 Feline Panleucopenia
- 4 Feline Leukemia (FeLV)

## When should my cat be vaccinated?

Generally, the immunity that a kitten has at birth only lasts for a few weeks. It is then time to begin vaccination. The first vaccination is usually given in two doses, the first dose at around the age of 8-10 weeks and the second about 3-4 weeks later. Thereafter, your cat will require annual 'booster' vaccinations for the rest of his/her life to maintain protection. Of course, these are only guidelines - your veterinary surgeon will be able to determine the exact schedule that's right for your pet.

## Which vaccinations should my cat receive?

Your pet should be protected against those diseases which are most common, highly contagious and which cause serious illness or death. Such diseases include Feline Panleucopaenia, Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Feline Calicivirus and Feline Leukaemia. Feline Chlamydiosis or Rabies vaccines may also be recommended, based on your veterinary surgeon's evaluation of the risks posed by such factors as your cat's particular heredity, environment and lifestyle.

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## 1 Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

Just as with the human common cold, the virus that causes this upper respiratory-tract infection ('cat flu') is easily transmitted from one cat to another, so vaccination is imperative if your pet will come in contact with other cats. Its symptoms may take the form of moderate fever, loss of appetite, sneezing, eye and nasal discharges and coughing. Kittens are particularly affected, but this disease can be dangerous in any unprotected cat, as effective treatment is limited. Even if a cat recovers, it can remain a carrier for life.



## 2 Feline Calicivirus

This virus is another major cause of upper respiratory-tract infection ('cat flu') in cats. Widespread and highly contagious, its symptoms of fever, ulcers and blisters on the tongue and pneumonia (inflammation of the lungs) can range from mild to severe, depending on the strain of virus present. Once again, treatment of this disease can be difficult. Even if recovery does take place, a recovered cat can continue to infect other animals, as well as experience chronic sneezing and runny eyes. Vaccination is therefore tremendously important.



## 3 Feline Panleucopenia

This disease is caused by a virus so resistant, it can survive for up to one year outside a cat's body! Therefore, as most cats will be exposed to it during their lifetimes and infection rates in unprotected cats can run as high as 90% to 100%, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is absolutely essential. Symptoms can include listlessness, diarrhoea, vomiting, severe dehydration and fever. Happily, the vaccine itself is very effective in preventing the disease, as treatment is very difficult and, even if recovery takes place for a period of time, a once-infected cat can spread the disease to other, unvaccinated animals.



## 4 Feline Leukaemia (FeLV)

Infection with the Feline Leukaemia Virus can result in a multitude of serious health problems for your cat - everything from cancerous conditions such as leukaemia to a wide range of secondary infections caused by the destruction of the immune system. After initial exposure to the virus, a cat may show no symptoms of its presence for months, if not years, yet all the while infect others. Testing is available to determine the FeLV status of your cat. If he or she has not yet been infected, but is likely to come into contact with cats that are, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is highly recommended.



## Other Vaccinations

After evaluating your cat's particular situation and risk factors, your veterinary surgeon may also recommend vaccination against other infectious diseases. These might include:

## Feline Chlamydiosis

This bacterial disease is responsible for 15 to 20% of all feline respiratory diseases. It is extremely contagious, especially in young kittens and the infection rate is very high. It causes a local infection of the mucous membranes of the eyes but may also involve the lungs. Chlamydiosis can be transmitted to humans by direct contact. Vaccination is the preferred method for prevention.



## Rabies

This incurable viral disease affects the central nervous system of almost all mammals, including humans. It is spread through contact with the saliva of infected animals through bites or any break in the skin. Though not present in the UK, this disease occurs widely throughout many other countries of the world.



## How effective is vaccination?

Like any drug treatment or surgical procedure, vaccinations cannot be 100% guaranteed. However, used in conjunction with proper nutrition and acceptable sanitary conditions, vaccination is clearly your pet's best defence against disease. Plus, when you consider what treating a serious illness can cost you and your beloved cat in terms of both money and distress, prevention through vaccination is extremely cost-effective.

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## Comments

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