

Feline Vaccinations



There are a number of highly infectious (and potentially fatal) diseases that can affect your pet. Many of these diseases have no effective treatment, and in extreme cases, young animals may die.

However, for many of these conditions there is a simple protection in the form of vaccination and regular annual boosters, so we urge you to ensure that your pet is always up to date with the recommended protection.

Vaccinations are available against:

Feline panleukopaenia

Otherwise known as feline enteritis, this serious disease is caused by a highly infectious virus which can remain active in the environment for at least a year and the few cats who recover can continue to shed the virus for long periods.

As with many diseases, the very young or the elderly and debilitated are most susceptible, but all age groups can be affected. The incubation period is 5 to 7 days and in badly affected cats death can occur within 12 to 24 hours of the first symptoms being seen. Fever, depression, sudden weight loss, vomiting, loss of appetite and dehydration despite an insatiable thirst are common symptoms.

Cat flu

More accurately known as upper respiratory tract infection, cat flu can have more than one cause, but is often based on an initial virus attack, followed by a secondary bacterial infection.

Most people can easily recognise the typical signs of cat flu - a miserable cat with thick discharges from eyes, mouth and nose, often accompanied by bouts of sneezing. Severity can range from mild, with minimal lasting effects on the cat, to severe, with extension of infection to the lungs and leaving the patient weak and debilitated.

Transmission is usually via sneezing, but many of the flu viruses can remain active in the environment for some time, so indirect contact via food bowls, blankets or the hands and clothing of owners can spread infection.

Leukaemia

A recent survey has shown that 3 out of 4 cats will encounter the feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) at least once in their lives. FeLV is extremely contagious in cats but is absolutely harmless to man or to other animals.

40% of cats will mount an efficient immune response, reject the virus and make a full recovery. This category includes cats vaccinated against FeLV. 30% of cats are unable to fend off the virus, and it lies dormant until the cat's immune system is compromised, when the symptoms develop. The remaining 30% of cats are overwhelmed soon after infection, can transmit the virus to any in-contact cat and a large proportion will die within 3 years.



It is thought that FeLV is responsible for 70% of all cat cancers, either directly, or by allowing the access of other cancer-causing viruses.

How can I protect my cat?

With such serious diseases present in the wider cat population, we believe it is crucial to provide protection for your cat through an ongoing programme of vaccinations.

We recommend a combined flu, panleukopaenia and leukaemia vaccine in two doses, separated by a 3 week interval. Ideally, this should be started at 9 weeks of age but there is no maximum limit. Yearly boosters will then maintain protection throughout your cat's life.

Can my pregnant cat be vaccinated?

It is not advisable to vaccinate pregnant cats, but breeding queens do need a high level of antibodies to pass on to their kittens in the milk. Therefore, you can ensure that vulnerable kittens are protected by vaccinating the mother before she is mated. The kittens will be born with some degree of immunity, passed on from their mother, but this will gradually wear off in the coming weeks.

Like all young animals, a new kitten has very little in the way of defences against disease, so it is important to maintain isolation until vaccination cover is complete - usually one week after the last injection of the initial course.

During the first 9 weeks, do not allow contact with other cats or with the belongings or owners of any unvaccinated cats. When bringing your kitten to the surgery, keep it in a secure box or basket to ensure no possible contact with sick animals.

Maintaining protection for your cat

Keep the vaccination certificate in a safe place and bring it along to be updated at the time of each booster. If your cat is booked into a cattery, the proprietor will need to see the certificate as proof of up to date cover. If there is an interval of more than 15 months since the last vaccination, it will be necessary to start again with a new initial course, taking three weeks, so ensure adequate time is left so that your holiday arrangements are not endangered.

Although it is obviously advisable to start a vaccination programme as early as possible, there is no maximum age limit. In fact the older cat often becomes more vulnerable to infection with increasing age, so it is all the more important to maintain protection.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding vaccinations, please do not hesitate to speak with any of our team on 01435 864422

