

# Vaccinations

A photograph of a veterinarian in green scrubs administering a vaccine to a kitten held by a woman in a vet clinic. The veterinarian is on the left, leaning over a teal examination table. The woman is on the right, holding the kitten. The kitten is white with black and brown patches. The background is a light blue wall with a teal door frame.

*Your new kitten may have already received a vaccination. If your kitten is aged 8 or 9 weeks, you should know that it is not fully protected against many diseases. Care must be taken not to allow your kitten to roam where cats of unknown vaccination history may go until your kitten has completely finished the vaccination programme. For your kitten's best protection it is essential to maintain vaccination throughout your pet's life.*

## Why Should I Vaccinate My Cat?

*The principal of vaccination is to stimulate the body's defences against a variety of different diseases.*

*These defences involve a number of cells and body chemicals of which the best known is antibodies.*

*Kittens are protected against many infectious diseases by antibodies present in their mother's milk (colostrum) which they receive in the first few hours of life.*

*By the age of seven weeks the immunity provided by their mother begins to wear off.*

*For this reason vaccination is recommended from 8 or 9 weeks of age with a second vaccination at about 12 weeks.*

## Why It Is Necessary To Have Repeat Vaccinations?

Many people believe that if they have their pet vaccinated when they are kittens, the immunity they receive will protect them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately this is not the case. To maintain protection regular booster vaccinations are required. After the last booster injection, the immune level reaches a peak

and then begins a slow steady decline. Hence, regular boosters are required to maintain immunity. Re-vaccination stimulates the immune response so that protection is offered for an additional period. Without these booster vaccinations, your cat's immune system may not be able to protect it from serious, often fatal diseases.



● For each animal the veterinary surgeon will adapt the vaccination schedule according to the lifestyle of the animal and local disease conditions. Some vaccines may be combined in the same syringe; others may be administered on the same day but in two separa-

te injection points. As in children, most of the primary course of vaccination is carried out in successive injections.



## Infectious Disease in the Cat and it's Prevention

### What can we vaccinate against?

*Cat Flu, Feline Enteritis and Feline Leukaemia are the three main infectious diseases in the cat, along with Chlamydia, a common cause of conjunctivitis, these disease may be prevented by vaccination. There is no satisfactory vaccine yet for two more recently discovered viral diseases of the cat, Feline Infectious Peritonitis and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, both of which can cause fatal disease.*

#### *Cat Flu (feline respiratory disease)*

● Whilst not life threatening as the other diseases that can affect your cat, it can nevertheless cause distress to both the pet and its owner. Unless successfully treated, the effects, such as chronic nasal catarrh or inflamed eyes may be prolonged – even life-long.

#### *Feline Enteritis*

● There are two major forms of the disease ; Calici Virus and Herpes Virus. The symptoms vary, depending on which virus is involved. Common signs of the disease are coughing and sneezing, a high temperature, a loss of appetite, discharge from the eyes and nose, and in the case of the calici form, ulcers on the tongue.

● If your pet recovers from the disease they may remain carriers and act as a source of infection to other cats without showing symptoms themselves.

This obviously causes a particular problem in catteries and so it is essential that your cat is vaccinated before going into such an establishment.

● Also known as **Feline Panleucopenia**, this is one of the most dangerous infectious diseases of cats and kittens. Feline Enteritis is most common in kittens and young cats – the mortality rate is very high.

Death may be so sudden that there is no time for the symptoms to develop. A most distressing disease, the symptoms of vomiting, severe abdominal pain and rapid dehydration are so severe that owners often suspect that their pet has been poisoned.

## Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)

● (FeLV) is mainly transmitted by direct contact with an infected cat, particularly via the saliva through grooming. The virus is also present in blood, urine and other body fluids of infected cats but, as it does not survive for long outside the body on bowls, litter trays, human hands etc, it is unlikely to be spread by indirect contact.

There is a higher risk of infection when several cats live under the same roof.

The first stage of the disease is often unnoticed because the symptoms exhibited by an infected cat are very diverse and make diagnosis difficult.

Young cats are most susceptible but FeLV can strike cats of any age, breed or sex.

● Your vet will complete a certificate to record the vaccinations. This “vaccination book” contains the details of each vaccine and the date given. It is signed by the vet as a permanent record and is required as proof of your pets vaccination history when going to cattery.

