TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY like no other.

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Feline (Cat) Vaccine Information

Feline Vaccines: Benefit & Risks

Vaccines resemble infectious agents like bacteria or viruses (disease causing). When vaccines are administered to an animal, they "train" the immune system to protect against these infectious agents.

Vaccines work by training the immune system to recognize infectious agents by producing antibodies which are specialized proteins that bind like a lock and key to the infectious agent, and trigger actions to defeat the agents. When vaccinated cats come in contact with these agents the body quickly recognizes and activates the anti-producing cells that recognize the agents, producing an "immune response".

Kitten Vaccine Schedule

Age	Core Vaccines
6-8 weeks	FVRCP booster
8-12 weeks	FVRCP booster, Rabies (given at 12 weeks of age)
12-16 weeks	FVRCP booster (Rabies if not done at 12 weeks of age)
20 weeks	FVRCP final booster

Adult Cat Vaccine Schedule

Cats	Initial Series	Revaccination
FVRCP	Unvaccinated/Not Current: 1 vaccine	Revaccinate in 1 year, then every 3 years with Rabies
Rabies	Unvaccinated/Not Current: Vaccinate from 12 weeks of age	Revaccinate in 1 year, then every 3 years

Core and non-core vaccine definitions:

- Core vaccines are required for every cat, regardless of their lifestyle.
- Non-core vaccines may be needed depending on your pet's risk of exposure to disease.

During your cat's wellness appointment, a veterinarian will discuss your pet's lifestyle with you. This will allow them to make a vaccine plan tailored to your pet's unique needs.

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Vaccine Information

Core Vaccines

Rabies: Rabies is a viral disease of mammals and is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can spread from animals to people.

Rabies invades the central nervous system and causes headaches, anxiety, hallucinations, excessive drooling and fear of water. Paralysis, and death can often occur without treatment. It is most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Treatment within hours of infection is essential, otherwise, death is highly likely.

Vaccination is usually required by law because of how serious this disease is. All kittens and adult cats should be vaccinated against rabies followed by a yearly booster.

FVRCP : FVRCP stands for ***Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus***, and ***Panleukopenia***. These are core vaccines and are considered essential for all kittens.

Calicivirus and Rhinotracheitis are common feline viruses known to cause upper respiratory infections in cats. Some infected kittens show no signs of infection. Clinical signs vary from mild to severe, and infection can be fatal.

Common signs:

- Upper Respiratory include:
  - eye discharge
  - nose discharge
  - sneezing
  - swollen eyes) are common.
- Calicivirus
  - Ulcers in the mouth are a common clinical sign
    - Ulcers can involve the tongue, lips, palate, and mouth.
    - Severe inflammation of the gums and drooling can also occur
  - Lethargy
  - Fever
  - Anorexia.
  - Lameness.
  - Coughing and trouble breathing may be noted with pneumonia
  - Skin disease can also occur
    - Signs usually involve open sores on the face and nose.
    - Varying degrees of redness, swelling, oozing, crusting, and hair matting may be noted.

Panleukopenia, commonly referred to as Feline Distemper, is a very contagious and often fatal disease. The virus attacks rapidly growing and dividing cells like those in the intestines, bone marrow, and the developing fetus. An infected cat sheds large amounts of virus in all body secretions including ***feces, vomit, urine, saliva, and mucus***. The virus persists for a long time in the environment.

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The virus enters the cat's body and proceeds to seek and infect rapidly dividing cells. The lymph nodes in the throat are first to be affected. From there, over the next two to seven days, the virus rushes to the bone marrow and intestine.

In the bone marrow, the virus suppresses production of all the white blood cell lines. Hence, the term Panleukopenia (literally, “all-white-shortage”). White blood cells are the immune cells needed to fight the infection. In other words, the first order of the virus's business is to eliminate its host's defenses. From there it continues to the digestive tract.

In the digestive tract, the virus infects the digestive cells. This causes ulceration leading to diarrhea. It also causes life-threatening dehydration and bacterial infection. The patient can die of either dehydration or a secondary bacterial infection. The infection can be so rapidly overwhelming that death can occur before the vomiting and diarrhea even begins.

Non-Core Vaccines

FeLV: FELV or Feline Leukemia Virus is a non-core vaccine for cats, but it is recommended for all kittens. Adult cats who spend time outdoors should get this vaccine every year. Feline leukemia is one of the most common infectious diseases in cats.

It is spread most commonly through bite wounds or via prolonged close contact with infected cats. FeLV can cause a variety of health issues in cats, including cancer and immune system disorders.

FIV: FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, a feline virus spreads most commonly by bite wounds. This vaccine is non-core and recommended only for cats at a very high risk of exposure to FIV.

Though many FIV positive cats can live normal lives, those clinically affected can suffer from various illnesses due to a weakened immune system.

Non-core vaccines are not provided by Toronto Humane Society. Owners will need to contact a private vet.

Non-core recommended: FELV is *recommended* for all cats <1 year of age
Non-core, risk based: FELV > 1 year old, FIV, Bordetella (feline vaccine), Chlamydophila

References:

- *VIN*
- *AVMA*
- *SagePub*
- *Cornell University*