

Cat Protection Society – vaccinations statement

Cats in our care have been vaccinated in line with the Australian Veterinary Association's (AVA) position statement 6.7: Vaccination of dogs and cats.

The Vaccination Guideline Group of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association categorises vaccines as core, non-core or not recommended.

Core vaccines

All animals should receive core vaccines to protect them against severe, life-threatening diseases that have a worldwide distribution.

For cats, the core vaccines are feline parvovirus; feline calicivirus; and feline herpesvirus. The core vaccines are often referred to as 'F3'.

Your cat or kitten will have received at least their initial core vaccines. Your cat's paperwork will include the dates of vaccinations already received and due-dates for their next core vaccines.

It is generally recommended that after the initial vaccination schedule and first booster, core vaccines for cats should be administered every three years.

*Regardless of the vaccination schedule, **your cat should have a full health and dental check every year.** Remember, cats age differently from us and a year is a long time in the feline lifecycle! You should also take your cat for a check-up if you notice any changes in your cat's habits (toileting, eating, water consumption); appearance (coat, eyes, lumps and bumps; discharge); gait & jumping ability; activity levels & mood; noticeable weight gain or loss; or if they have bad breath (which can be a sign of tooth decay or kidney disease, among other things). If you feel something's not right, have it checked – you know your cat best.*

Some boarding catteries will require proof of annual vaccination or vaccination within the past 12 months prior to accepting a cat for boarding, and some may require a booster vaccination if there has been a lapse in re-vaccination. Discuss this with the boarding facility and your vet, and make sure you keep copies of your cat's vaccination records.

Non-core vaccines

Non-core vaccines are required only by those animals whose geographic location, local environment or lifestyle places them at risk of contracting specific infections.

Cat Protection cares for cats temporarily and our cats are adopted into a wide range of forever homes. We do not administer non-core vaccinations for our cats because we cannot anticipate their future living environments.

Any decisions on non-core vaccines need to be made by you in consultation with your vet, taking into account your cat's living circumstances, noting that these may change over the cat's lifetime and will be influenced by a number of variables such as whether your cat goes outdoors or is regularly boarded.

FIV and FeLV

Cat Protection takes a risk-management approach to testing cats for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). Tests are imperfect (FIV is a non-core vaccine and vaccinated cats can test positive to an FIV test), and some FIV positive cats can test negative to a test. The accuracy of diagnostic tests is increased if these are performed on unwell cats. Screening of healthy cats is not currently recommended due to difficulty in determining whether a positive result is a true or false positive. FIV suppresses the immune system of affected cats, predisposing them to other disease. In general, healthy, FIV-positive cats unexposed to other disease (especially those living exclusively indoors) can live long and happy lives with FIV.

If your cat *has* been tested, this will be noted on the health records you take home in your adoption pack. If there is no record of an FIV test, your cat has not been tested. We do not knowingly rehome cats with FIV. There is more information on FIV on our website and you may wish to discuss with your vet whether or not you wish to test your cat.

Cat Protection does not test for feline leukaemia virus (FeLV). FeLV is quite rare in Sydney. Many cats will spontaneously clear an initial FeLV infection but if they are persistently infected, FeLV can cause fatal health problems. FeLV can be spread from mother to kitten but transmission is most common by the saliva of infected cats. Sadly, the course of the disease can be rapid.

Kittens cannot be tested for FeLV.

While adult cats can be tested, the tests are very expensive and a single test is not reliable. As with FIV, a positive result may be a true positive or a false positive result. For accurate results, a test needs to be repeated after three months and then a further (different) test needs to be done to confirm the diagnosis. Therefore, it is either impossible or impractical for us to test for FeLV. It should also be noted that there are significant risks associated with the FeLV vaccine including a risk of cancer, and the vaccine is not guaranteed to be 100 per cent effective. FeLV is a non-core vaccine.

General health

Just as we are, every cat is an individual and a range of factors will influence their health, including nutrition and exercise, immunisation, exposure to toxins or danger, and genetics. Mental health also plays an important role in general health for cats.

As with people, no guarantees can be made about cats' future health.

Cat Protection has consulted with our vets on all the cats in our care, and if there are any particular issues relating to the health of your cat, information on this will be in your adoption pack.

We recommend that you find a vet you feel comfortable with – the best care for your cat will come when you and your vet have a good relationship. We recommend that you take your cat to the vet at least every year, or when you notice something is 'not right'.

Providing your cat with quality nutrition, keeping them safe indoors or with restricted outdoor access, ensuring regular vet check-ups; reducing their exposure to stress; and giving them lots of love and attention will go far in ensuring your cat's quality of life and general health.