

Cat Protection Society – vaccinations statement

Cats in our care have been vaccinated in line with the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) feline vaccination guidelines 2016.

The Vaccination Guideline Group of WSAVA recommends that vaccines be defined 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 global distribution.

For cats, the core vaccines are feline parvovirus (FPV); feline calicivirus (FCV); and feline herpesvirus-1 (FHV-1). FPV causes fatal disease, while FCV and FHV-1 cause respiratory disease, also known as cat 'flu'. The core vaccines are often referred to as an 'F3' vaccination. The immunity provided against FPV is robust and long-lasting, and fully protects against infection. Cats vaccinated against FCV and FHV-1 can still be infected by these viruses, but are protected from developing severe disease.

Cats, and kittens aged 6 weeks or older, are vaccinated on entry. Kittens are vaccinated every 2 to 4 weeks, until 16 weeks or older. Adult cats receive a second vaccination 2 to 4 weeks after the first. If still in our care, kittens have a booster vaccination at six months of age. If still in our care, cats are vaccinated again 12 months after the booster vaccination.

When you adopt a cat or kitten from Cat Protection, you will be given folder of information about your cat that includes the records of vaccinations already administered and the due-date for your cat's next F3 vaccination.

It is generally recommended that after the initial vaccination schedule and first booster, core vaccines for cats should be administered every three years. This is appropriate for low-risk cats such as indoor-only cats living with only one or two other cats. Cats living in multi-cat and multi-pet households; cats who have outdoor access; cats who are regularly boarded; and cats in households where people work with animals are at more risk, and annual vaccination is recommended. In the wake of the FPV outbreaks on the Australian east coast since 2017, rebuilding feline herd immunity is critical. Discuss with your vet the most appropriate vaccination schedule for your cat/s.

This is the best practice approach to vaccination of a cat or kitten. However, if you are caring for a cat and practical or financial constraints mean they can only receive one vaccination, this should be a live vaccine administered at 16 weeks or older.

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.

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) are non-core vaccines. Cat Protection takes a risk-management approach to testing cats for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). When testing for FIV, FeLV is also tested. We do not knowingly rehome FIV positive cats due to the potential risk to feline population health. 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.

If your cat *has* been tested, this will be noted on the health records that you will receive in your adoption pack. If there is no record of an FIV test, your cat has not been tested.

Cat Protection does not routinely 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, and by the saliva of infected cats during grooming or eating from shared bowls. Sadly, the course of the disease can be rapid.

As the chances of infection are very low, we do not routinely vaccinate against FeLV as there are some risks associated with the vaccine, including a risk of cancer.

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.

Every Cat Protection cat and kitten has been health-checked by a vet and any necessary veterinary procedures are undertaken. The records for these, including the details of the treating vet, are included in the adoption paperwork for your reference. As with people, no guarantees can be made about cats' future health.

You may wish to maintain the vet who treated your cat while they were at Cat Protection, or you may wish to choose a vet you know, or who is close to where you live. The most important consideration in choosing a veterinarian is that you are comfortable with them. The best care for your cat will arise when you and your vet have a good relationship and clear communications.

Your cat should have a full health and dental check every year, even if they do not need a vaccination. The age-stages of cats mean 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.

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.