

**Jefferson Animal Hospital &  
Regional Emergency Center**  
4504 Outer Loop / P.O. Box 19378  
Louisville, KY 40219  
Phone 502.966.4104  
Fax 502.966.3904  
Email [jahdoctor@aol.com](mailto:jahdoctor@aol.com)

**Jefferson Animal Hospitals**  
[www.jeffersonanimalhospital.com](http://www.jeffersonanimalhospital.com)

**Jefferson Animal Hospital East**  
5400 Del Maria Way  
Louisville, KY 40291  
Phone 502.499.6535  
Fax 502.495.6325  
Email [jaeast@aol.com](mailto:jaeast@aol.com)

## **Feline Leukemia Virus Q & A**

### **Q. What is Feline Leukemia?**

A. Leukemia is a highly fatal blood cell cancer that is contagious between cats. It is a leading cause of cat deaths and until now there has been no prevention or cure. The name "Feline Leukemia Virus" (FeLV) gives merely a hint of just how much trouble this contagious virus can cause. Another cancer, Lymphosarcoma, is actually a more common FeLV disease. Still more common are associated diseases such as Feline Infectious Peritonitis, Respiratory Disease and Fading Kitten Syndrome. Cats infected with FeLV have limited ability to resist other infections by even the most common bacteria, colds, stomach problems, skin and mouth sores and anemia.

### **Q. How can I prevent my cat from getting Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)?**

A. The only way besides vaccination is to prevent you cat's exposure to other cats. This is very impractical since many are outside cats, or accompany their owners on trips or are boarded during vacations or are taken to cat shows, etc. Vaccination is recommended as the best protective procedure.

### **Q. What signs would my cat show if he has Feline Leukemia Virus?**

A. It's impossible to precisely diagnose FeLV entirely from the observable signs in the early stages because FeLV is associated with so many different disorders. However, signs such as depression, fever, loss of appetite and swollen glands in the neck or abdomen suggest onset of FeLV related disease. There are a number of tests available to test a cat for FeLV. No test is 100% accurate, but the reliability of these tests is considered quite good. Feline Leukemia Virus is today regarded as a leading cause of pet cat deaths. Cats infected with FeLV rarely live more than three years and most die of associated diseases before the cancer develops.

### **Q. What if my cat already has Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)?**

A. The vaccine has no effect on a cat already infected with the virus. It doesn't make it better or worse. The vaccine is not a treatment or a cure and we do not recommend the vaccine for cats already infected with FeLV. We do recommend that all cats be TESTED before receiving the vaccine. This test can be done by obtaining a small sample of blood and performing this simple test at Jefferson Animal Hospital's lab facilities.

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### **Q. Does the vaccine cause FeLV disease?**

A. Absolutely NOT! The vaccine is composed of only parts of the Virus, not the complete virus. You cat has to be exposed to the complete virus particle to contract the disease.

**Q. Can my kitten be vaccinated?**

A. The earliest recommended age for vaccination is 9 weeks old. We do recommend testing on all kittens 6 weeks of age and older because it is possible for a kittens to be exposed to the virus in the mothers womb.

**Q. How many injections are necessary for protection?**

A. Two injections are necessary. IF your cat has tested negative for FeLV, we can schedule the first vaccination, then three weeks later the second vaccination. An annual booster is recommended.

If you have any additional questions, we do have informational brochures on the vaccine and literature describing in detail the FeLV Disease complex and associated diseases. We also have an excellent film in our film library that describes the disease.