

## **Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) – The Retroviruses**

FeLV and FIV are among the most common infectious diseases of cats. Risk factors for infection include male gender, adulthood, and outdoor access, whereas indoor lifestyle and sterilization are associated with reduced infection rates.

*Cats should be tested when they are:*

- Sick, regardless of age, despite previous negative test results or previous vaccination
- About to be adopted, regardless of age, or brought into a new household
- At risk of exposure even if their most recent test was negative
- Of “unknown” viral status
- About to be vaccinated against FeLV or FIV

The retroviral status of all cats should be known. Cats may require retrovirus testing at different times in their lives. Here are some general principles for retrovirus testing:

- A cat with a confirmed positive test should be diagnosed as having a retroviral infection
- Cats infected with FeLV or FIV may live for many years. A decision for euthanasia should never be made solely on the basis of whether or not the cat is infected
- No test is 100% accurate at all times under all conditions. All test results should be interpreted along with the patient’s health and prior likelihood of infection. All positives should be confirmed by another test method.

### **Vaccinations**

#### ***FeLV***

- Cats that go outside
- Cats that have direct contact with cats of unknown status or in high turnover situations such as foster homes or other group housing .
- Cats that live with FeLV-positive cats.

#### ***FIV***

- Currently, we do not recommend vaccinating cats for FIV due to the fact that once a cat has been vaccinated, they will always test positive for FIV on in – house retroviral tests. Vaccinations do not cover all strains of FIV.