

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and Feline Leukemia Virus

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) are diseases that cause suppression of the immune system, limiting a cat's ability to protect itself against secondary infections caused by common bacteria, viruses, protozoa and fungi. FIV and FeLV infections occur worldwide, with prevalence varying by location. **FIV is contagious and spreads from cat to cat, typically through biting and fighting. FeLV is also spread when cats fight, but is primarily spread through casual contact such as mutual grooming, sharing food/water bowls and litter boxes.** Mother cats that are infected can pass the virus to their offspring, either before birth or through nursing.

What cats are at greatest risk of infection?

Cats at greatest risk of infection are those that may be exposed to infected cats, either via prolonged close contact or through bite wounds. Such cats include:

- Cats living with infected cats or with cats of unknown infection status
- Cats allowed outdoors unsupervised, where they may socialize with an infected cat
- Kittens born to infected mothers

Kittens are much more susceptible to infection than are adult cats, and therefore are at the greatest risk of infection if exposed.

What are the signs of disease caused by FIV or FeLV?

During the early stages of infection, **it is common for cats to exhibit no signs of disease at all.**

However, over time—weeks, months, or even years—the cat's health may progressively deteriorate or be characterized by recurrent illness interspersed with periods of relative health. Signs can include:

- Loss of appetite
- Slow but progressive weight loss, followed by severe wasting late in the disease process
- Poor coat condition
- Persistent fever
- Pale gums and other mucus membranes
- Inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) and mouth (stomatitis)
- Infections of the skin, urinary bladder, and upper respiratory tract
- Persistent diarrhea
- Seizures, behavior changes, and other neurological disorders
- A variety of eye conditions

The American Association of Feline Practitioners recommends performing screening tests for all kittens, testing all new feline additions to the household prior to allowing them to interact with current members, and annual testing for cats that are at risk (indoor/outdoor – or outdoor only cats).

- I elect to have an FIV/FeLV screening test performed on my feline companion at this time.
- I decline having an FIV/FeLV screening test performed on my feline companion at this time.

Name of Cat: _____ Signature of

Owner: _____