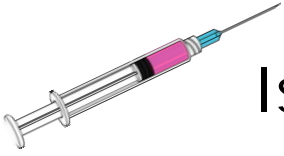




[www.greystonesvet.ie](http://www.greystonesvet.ie)



## Is Vaccination Important for cats?



### Why vaccination is important:

Every year many cats of all ages become seriously ill or die from infectious diseases which could have been prevented through vaccination. Vaccines are routinely used for three major diseases: feline leukaemia virus, infectious enteritis and cat 'flu' because the viruses that cause these diseases are widespread in the UK population. All unvaccinated cats are at risk since there is no specific treatment for viral diseases.

### How vaccines work:

Vaccines stimulate the body's defence system to produce protective antibodies and cells in the blood. These protect against specific diseases. This protection is called immunity. Unfortunately this does not last for life and booster vaccinations are required to maintain the immunity produced by the initial course of vaccinations.

### Cat diseases explained:

#### Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)

Of all the infectious agents that affect cats, this virus is the single most important cause of mortality. Your cat can become infected through contact with an infected cat. Those infected by FeLV may show no symptoms for months or years. Most cats die within three years of becoming persistently infected. FeLV kills cats in a variety of ways including causing cancer or anaemia or destroying the immune system allowing other infections to develop. Vaccination and regular boosters will protect your cat from the virus.



#### Feline Infectious Enteritis (FIE)

FIE is an extremely contagious disease associated with a high death rate in young kittens, although cats of all ages can be affected. Once affected a cat may deteriorate rapidly with vomiting, diarrhoea and depression being common symptoms. The disease is mainly spread through direct contact with an infected cat or its faeces. It is extremely difficult to treat.

#### Cat 'flu'

The two most important causes of cat 'flu' are feline viral rhinotracheitis (FVR) and feline calicivirus (FCV).

FVR is a highly contagious severe respiratory disease causing sneezing, loss of appetite, fever and sore eyes. Although few adult cats die from FVR it can be fatal in kittens. Death is often the result of dehydration and secondary bacterial infections.

FCV causes symptoms similar to those of FVR although infected cats also commonly have mouth and tongue ulcers. Direct contact with infected cats is the most common method of transmission. Feline calicivirus severely affects kittens and poorly cats and although the death rate is low, it can pave the way for other viral or bacterial infections which can cause pneumonia.

### Carrier cats

Cat 'flu' and feline leukaemia virus remain widespread in the cat population because of carrier cats. Carrier cats appear perfectly healthy but 'carry' and shed the viruses. These cats are capable of transmitting disease to any unvaccinated cats that they meet. Ensuring that your cat is vaccinated is part of responsible pet ownership.

## Why you need to vaccinate your cat regularly:

### Primary vaccination

During the first weeks after birth antibodies in the mother's milk protect a kitten against disease. This maternal immunity gradually decreases leaving your kitten no longer protected. When your new kitten arrives contact the veterinary hospital for advice on when to start vaccinations. We will advise you of the vaccinations your kitten will require and when it is safe to allow your kitten outside and to mix with other cats. When the vaccination course is completed you will be given a signed vaccination certificate. This is an important document and is essential for your cat to be allowed into catteries.

### Annual health check and vaccination

Initial vaccine protection does not last for life so it is crucial to take your cat to the veterinary hospital every year for booster vaccinations. An annual health check is an important part of maintaining the health of your cat. At this time we will advise you of the vaccinations your cat requires for continued protection against infectious diseases and you also have an opportunity to discuss any other requirements for a healthy, happy cat. The date you should return your cat for an annual health check and booster vaccinations should be recorded in your vaccination certificate.

### Boarding your cat whilst on holiday

You must have an up-to-date vaccination certificate if you intend to board your cat while you are on holiday. You should allow at least 2 weeks between the date of final vaccination and entry into the cattery to allow the vaccine time to work. If your adult cat has missed its booster or has not been vaccinated as a kitten a primary vaccination course may be needed to achieve full protection.

If you are in any doubt as to the vaccination status of your cat, or have any questions about vaccination, simply ask us for advice.