

# FelV and FIV

We have all heard the names Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline Aids (FIV) being thrown around, but how close to home is it really and are our cats in danger. A study done by a veterinary laboratory, from January 2000 to February 2002, showed that out of 2167 cats tested for FIV 15% were positive.

## What exactly are these diseases?

Both are caused by viruses that impair the immune system, are highly contagious, lead to tumour development and have no curative treatment.

## Who is at risk?

There is a higher risk of infection when several cats live together. Outdoor cats also fall into the high risk category.

## To test or not to test?

There are immense variations in the clinical symptoms of infected cats. It is therefore wise to test all sick cats and especially those that are chronically ill. All new additions to a household should be tested before introduction and the status in the household should also be known.



FeLV + FIV  
negative

FIV positive

FeLV positive

FIV + FeLV  
positive



## How do cats get infected?

The viruses are transmitted by direct contact with an affected cat carrying the virus in its saliva. FeLV is primarily spread by grooming and FIV by fighting and biting. FeLV can also be transmitted from infected queens to unborn kittens via the placenta; it is therefore possible that a kitten can be infected at birth.

## Can infection be prevented?

Yes, in both cases a vaccine can be administered to protect exposed and 'high risk' cats. The FeLV vaccine is more widely used and does not interfere with testing whereas the FIV vaccine is not as popular and will give a false positive result on the test done.

Other measures include neutering cats, keeping cats indoors and isolating positive cats from negative cats.

## Is my cat going to die 'Doc'?

Once a cat is infected with feline leukemia there are 3 possible outcomes.

1. About 40% develop immunity, will eliminate the virus and become resistant to future infections. These cats will test negative on follow-up tests.
2. 30% become carriers of the disease – neither fully recovered nor seriously ill.
3. 30% are persistently infected and of these 83% will die within 3 years of the time of infection.

FIV positive cats could live for many years post diagnosis.

A positive test result does not equal euthanasia, but gives you as owner the tools to be pro-active should Tom be under the weather. Positive cats could be isolated and so spreading of the disease in a population can be prevented. Follow-up testing is advised to identify those individuals who have recovered from the virus.

We offer a R50 discount on the test for the month of May 2012. It only takes 10 minutes to run.

