



Vaccinations

What are vaccinations?

Vaccinations (or immunisations) are a way of providing protection against some viruses and bacteria that cats are at risk from. This relies on administering the organisms that can cause disease, either in a killed form, or a live form that has been modified. This stimulates the cat's immune system so that when these diseases are met, the cat is better able to resist infection.

Should my kitten or cat be vaccinated?

Vaccination has played a major role in reducing the incidence, or severity, of diseases such as cat 'flu and infectious enteritis. Vaccination is widely recommended by experts as a way to safeguard your cat's health.

What can my cat or kitten be vaccinated against?

Vaccines are available against cat 'flu and infectious enteritis and these tend to be given on a routine basis. There are also vaccines available against feline leukaemia virus (FeLV), *Chlamydomphila felis* (a bacteria that can cause 'flu-like signs and eye problems), and *Bordetella bronchiseptica* (a bacteria that can also cause 'flu-like illness and chest infections). If your cat is to travel abroad, it is likely that vaccination against rabies will also be required.

Should my cat receive all available vaccinations?

Not all cats will need to be vaccinated against every illness. It is currently recommended that a vet carries out a risk assessment to ascertain whether your cat is likely to contract any particular infection. This will depend on the disease patterns within the area and the cat's lifestyle. Cats that go outdoors, or have contact with many other cats, may be more at risk than others. Cats that have had contact with dogs with respiratory disease (particularly kennel cough) may be at greater risk of developing *Bordetella* infection.

When should my kitten or cat be vaccinated?

Kittens are normally vaccinated from eight to nine weeks, with a second vaccination given three to four weeks later. Adult cats that have never been vaccinated will also require two vaccines, three to four weeks apart as their initial course.

How often should my cat receive boosters?

Boosters are required at regular intervals, usually annually. However, it is recommended that a vaccination programme for individual cats be decided in discussion between owner and vet, taking into account the risk of that cat getting infection.

Are vaccines 100 per cent effective?

Unfortunately, vaccines do not provide 100 per cent protection for various reasons. For instance, some viruses present themselves as many different strains, or cats can be incubating disease before vaccination, yet show no signs that they have already been infected (in the case of FeLV this state can last for years).

Are there any risks involved in vaccination?

The risk of a reaction to a vaccine is very small (around one reported suspect reaction for every 20,000 doses of vaccine given). This could be a mild reaction, with the cat appearing to be slightly tender at the site of injection, or a more severe anaphylactic (allergic) reaction. Recent reports from the USA suggest that there may be a link between injections, or vaccinations, and the appearance of a particular kind of tumour called fibrosarcoma developing. This kind of tumour remains very rare in the UK (0.021 fibrosarcomas have appeared for every 10,000 doses of cat vaccine given). It is important to note that surveys have so far been unable to establish a definite link between the act of vaccination, any particular vaccine, or type of vaccine, and fibrosarcoma developing.



Cats and people – Living in harmony

Helpline: 08702 099 099 Web: www.cats.org.uk

17 Kings Road Horsham West Sussex RH13 5PN Charity No. 203644