

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

With the Christmas holidays fast approaching, we are busy getting everyone's cats and dogs up-to-date with their vaccinations, so that they can safely board at the cattery & kennels, while we head to the beach!

A new vaccine has recently become available for cats, which protects against FIV, or Feline Aids. We realised at our recent Open Day, that there is a common misconception that this vaccine is included in our regular "core" vaccination programmes for cats. IT'S NOT!

So please, if you would like your cat protected against FIV, ask us about it.

FIV is a virus that interferes with the immune system of a cat. It lives in the blood of an infected cat & is carried in its system throughout its life.

It is spread from cat to cat primarily through bite wounds, the virus being shed in high levels through saliva. After infection some cats show no signs of disease, while others display initial symptoms such as fever, loss of appetite, diarrhoea & lethargy. They can then remain healthy for up to 10 years, but as the disease progresses symptoms of immune suppression develop, such as:

- Weight loss
- Sores in and around the mouth
- Eye lesions
- Poor coat
- Chronic infections

Eventually the immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections or diseases. As a result, the cat will die from one of these subsequent infections.

(The feline virus is related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) but humans cannot become infected with the feline virus.)

14% of New Zealand cats are infected with FIV and outdoor cats are at the highest risk of contracting the disease.

There is no treatment or cure for an FIV infected cat. Vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease.

The initial course requires 3 doses 2-4 weeks apart, then an annual vaccination is recommended. For cats older than 6 months old, we blood test them first, to ensure they have not already become infected.

Again, please ask us about vaccinating your cat against this debilitating and ultimately fatal disease.

