

The Greater Cartersville-Bartow Veterinary Group

PREVENTATIVE HEALTH CARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATS

DISTEMPER COMBINATION VACCINE/FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, & Panleukopenia)

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis tends to be the more severe respiratory disease and can cause abortions in pregnant cats.

Feline Calicivirus is characterized by upper respiratory symptoms, pneumonia, oral ulceration (sores in the mouth), and occasionally arthritis.

Panleukopenia, or feline distemper, is an intestinal disease, causing vomiting and diarrhea.

Cats with respiratory disease have watery or sticky discharge from the nose and eyes, inflamed eyes, nose and mouth sores, and fever. Respiratory disease is easily transmitted through coughing or sneezing. Kittens can die from the disease, especially if they get pneumonia.

FVRCP Vaccination recommendations:

- ❑ Begin vaccinations at about 7 weeks of age
- ❑ Revaccinate every 3 weeks until 16 weeks of age
- ❑ Annual revaccination is necessary to maintain adequate protection against the respiratory viruses

RABIES VACCINE

All warm-blooded animals (dogs, cats, livestock, and wildlife) can become infected with rabies virus. Because rabies is also a threat to humans, many states, including Georgia, require vaccination of all dogs and cats. Even indoor animals can be exposed to rabies, often by wildlife (especially bats) entering the house.

Rabies is a virus that attacks nerve tissue, developing slowly over 10 days to several months. Infected animals may withdraw, avoid contact with people & animals, become unnaturally aggressive, and may attack. Death always occurs once an infected animal shows signs of disease. If humans are infected, they can be vaccinated successfully in early stages of the disease. Treatment, however, is unpleasant and costly.

In North America, most rabies exists in wildlife, especially raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Rabies is spread by bite wounds and exposure to the saliva of infected animals. Therefore, an unvaccinated dog involved in a fight with any animal should be suspect for rabies exposure. When rabies is diagnosed, any exposed, unvaccinated animals must be quarantined for six months or euthanized (humanely destroyed). In contrast, an exposed, vaccinated animal is given a booster vaccine and is then considered safe from infection.

Rabies Vaccination recommendations:

- First vaccination is given at 3-4 months of age or older
- Revaccinate annually

FELINE LEUKEMIA VACCINE & FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS TEST (FeLV / FIV Test)

Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus are two common viruses in cats. Infection can be from mother to kitten or from exposure to another infected cat. Both viruses interfere with the immune system, leaving it unable to fight off other infections. While some cats can successfully fight off an infection with one of these viruses, most cats will eventually die from a virus-related disease.

FeLV Test Recommendation:

- ❑ Test all new kittens & cats; Retest anytime cat could have possible exposure

FIV Test recommendation:

- ❑ Test **all** new kittens & cats; kittens retest 1-2 months later if tested prior to 9 weeks of age

Feline Leukemia Vaccination (FeLV) recommendation:

The vaccine for FeLV is well-tested and effective, and we routinely vaccinate all kittens and adult cats.

- ❑ 2 initial vaccinations, given 3 weeks apart, then re-vaccinate annually.

NOTES ABOUT FIV AND FIP VACCINES

FIV: There was a new vaccine for FIV released in the fall of 2002, and its effectiveness remains unproven. Unfortunately, there are concerns with this vaccine and we will not administer it until those concerns are addressed.

FIP: Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) is a frustrating disease for researchers — recent work suggests it is caused by a mutation of a virus common to the systems of many, if not most, cats. As such, vaccination is not likely to make a significant difference in the incidence of the disease and is no longer part of the preventative health care recommendations.