



Vaccinating Your Cat

Vaccinations against potentially fatal and highly contagious diseases are available at this Practice. The diseases commonly vaccinated against are Cat Flu (Feline Herpes Virus and Calicivirus), Feline Infectious Enteritis (Panleucopaenia) and Feline Leukaemia Virus.

Feline Panleucopaenia

This disease was once a common cause of death in cats, but is now seen less often due to vaccination. Young cats are particularly at risk and symptoms include severe vomiting and diarrhoea. This often results in severe dehydration and can cause death within as little as 2-3 days. The virus is spread in faeces and can survive for long periods in the environment, thereby posing a threat to unvaccinated cats.

Feline Cat Flu

This viral infection is not usually fatal, although very young cats and old cats may be more susceptible. The symptoms include sneezing, nasal and ocular discharge, lethargy, dullness and inappetence. Affected cats may also develop mouth ulcers which can be extremely painful. The Herpes virus can be carried by an affected cat for life. They may be healthy or have recurrent flu symptoms and these cats pose a threat to other unvaccinated cats.

Feline Leukaemia (FeLV)

Feline Leukaemia is an important disease to vaccinate against, for cats with outdoor access. Although the overall infection rate in the cat population is now lower (again due to vaccination), if a cat becomes infected with the virus it will develop life threatening disease, which is almost always fatal. The virus is spread through bodily fluids and can be spread by fighting, grooming, mating and feeding. It can also be transmitted from an infected mother to her kittens via the placenta or through her milk. Young cats are most likely to become infected, though may appear healthy for many months or even years, until symptoms such as tumours, anaemia or other signs develop. Diagnosis is made by blood testing which is available at the surgery.

Other Vaccinations

Two other vaccinations are available for cats, although these are used less often and in specific circumstances.



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Rabies

Vaccinations for Rabies may be required if you wish to travel abroad with your cat. Please speak with a Veterinary Surgeon and view our separate literature regarding this. Rabies vaccinations are not currently recommended for cats solely resident in the UK.

Chlamydia

This bacteria causes severe conjunctivitis and flu like symptoms. Cats from large breeding colonies are often vaccinated against Chlamydia as it may also cause infertility. Chlamydia vaccinations are available from the Practice on request. Please discuss this with your Veterinary Surgeon if you would like further information.

Vaccination Programme

Cats require an initial course of vaccinations to be given three weeks apart. Kittens are generally vaccinated at 9 weeks and 12 weeks of age. Prior to this, kittens should be protected by immunity passed from the mother in the first milk (colostrum). This is of course if the mother has been adequately vaccinated.

Both cats and kittens should not mix with unvaccinated cats until 2 weeks after their second vaccination to allow full immunity to develop. Following the primary course, yearly booster vaccinations are required to maintain immunity. Bringing your cat for an annual booster and health check also gives us the opportunity to pick up on any potential problems earlier and discuss any queries you may have regarding your pet's health.

Risk of Vaccination

There have been many articles written regarding the safety of vaccinations, however the danger posed by the diseases above is very real. Side effects are possible with any medication and with regards to vaccinations, any side effects are usually mild and of a temporary nature. Side effects may include a transient fever, shivering, inappetance or a small swelling at the injection site. These symptoms may be seen but are uncommon. If you are at all concerned, then please contact your nearest Chantry Vets surgery. Whilst infectious disease may seem uncommon, this is due to the safe and effective vaccination programmes that are now easily accessible throughout the UK.

Other Infectious Diseases of Cats

Two other infectious and fatal diseases occur regularly in domestic cats, unfortunately these conditions do not have a vaccination currently available.

FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis)

FIP occurs after infection with Corona Virus. In most infections the disease is mild and occasionally results in diarrhoea. In some individuals the body mounts an



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inappropriate immune response to the virus and this can result in two variations of the disease- Wet FIP or Dry FIP. Wet FIP is more common and symptoms relate to fluid accumulation in the chest or abdomen. The most common symptoms include a distended abdomen, inappetance and weight loss, although fluid build up in the chest will display as difficulty breathing and respiratory signs. Diagnosis can be difficult with this disease, particularly in the dry form where granulomas (inflammatory masses) are formed in any body organ. Unfortunately cats who develop FIP usually deteriorate quickly and the condition is fatal.

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

This virus is spread predominantly by fighting or mating with an infected cat. In a similar way to human HIV, carriers of FIV may appear clinically well for several years and hence can spread the disease to many other cats. Symptoms are often vague and can include dental disease, general malaise and recurrent infections. Diagnosis is made by blood testing which is available at the surgery. Although no vaccine is currently available, neutering at an early age is strongly recommended as a suitable preventative measure. Neutered cats will not mate and are much less likely to engage in fighting activities.

At Chantry Vets we strongly recommend vaccinations for all outdoor cats against Cat Flu, Enteritis and Leukaemia. We also recommend that annual booster vaccinations against these diseases are also administered.

For Indoor only cats, we recommend annual vaccinations against Flu and Enteritis.

Please speak to one of our Veterinary Surgeons or Qualified Nurses should you need any further information.