

ONTARIO SPCA AND HUMANE SOCIETY

Ontario's animal charity since 1873.

Disease Name:	Feline Leukemia (FeLV)	
Agent:	Feline leukemia virus (enveloped RNA retrovirus)	
Clinical Signs:	Leukemia, cancer, immune suppression, anemia and secondary infections	
Susceptible domestic species	Cats	
Zoonotic?	No	
Diagnostic tests:	ELISA test antigen in blood or serum	IFA test for antigen in blood or serum
Test sensitivity (false negatives)	Very good (much worse on saliva or tears)	Good, but not as sensitive as ELISA
Test specificity (false positives)	Good (also good on saliva and tears); however, cats may clear infection. Retesting recommended (see below).	Good
Test comments	When disease is uncommon, as is often the case in healthy-looking cats, false positives are relatively more frequent and confirmation is important.	
Vaccine available?	Yes, It needs to be given every year. Experts differ as to how effective the vaccine is; certainly most vaccinated cats do not get feline leukemia, but some experts claim that almost every adult cat is inherently rather immune to the virus anyway. The vaccine is safe- there is no truth to the worry that FIP (another viral infection of cats) can be made worse by the vaccine, at least as it is currently formulated. Generally NOT recommended in shelter	
Vaccine efficacy	Moderate (~ 70% efficacy)	
Excreted in :	Primarily saliva, although also found in milk, blood, urine and feces.	
Mode of transmission:	Close contact or fomites contaminated with saliva. Does not survive long in environment.	
Disinfection	Routine disinfection is adequate.	
Incubation	Up to four weeks from exposure to viremia detectable by antigen test; development of clinical signs may not occur for months after infection (average survival 2 years). 50% cats will die within 2 years, 80% within 3 years.	
Post-recovery shedding	No, but see comment below	
Carrier state?	Cats may be viremic and appear healthy for extended periods, but are infectious to other cats.	



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PROTECTING ANIMALS SINCE 1873

SHELTER HEALTH PRO

PPE Required	Gloves, gown
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