

What are vaccines?

Vaccines are biological products that activate protective immune responses and prepare your pet to fight future infections from disease causing agents. When vaccinated, your pet's immune system will recognise the invasion of the virus or bacteria and then work to eliminate it from their system.

It is important to vaccinate?

Yes. Pets should be vaccinated to protect them from many highly contagious and infectious diseases.

Due to the regular vaccination of pets over the years the occurrence of infectious diseases has decreased. However, occasional outbreaks of infectious diseases do occur and **the best form of protection is having your cat fully vaccinated.**



Protection from vaccination declines over time and it is advised that you **re-vaccinate your cat annually** to ensure ongoing and strong immunity. This also allows you to maintain regular annual health checks for your pet.

Why do kittens require a series of vaccinations?

Protective antibodies are transferred to kittens in their mother's milk (this is called natural immunity), however this wears off over time leaving the kittens susceptible to infection. These maternal antibodies may also interfere with vaccines. Therefore, it is recommended to have a series of vaccinations 3 – 4 weeks apart to ensure maximum protection is provided when the kitten is most at risk.

It is important that you minimise contact between your kitten and other cats until the series of vaccinations has been completed – when kittens are not fully immunised they may still be at risk of infection. Your veterinarian can best advise you at what stage it is safe to socialise your kitten.

Which diseases should I routinely vaccinate my cat against?

It is important to discuss with your veterinarian your pet's lifestyle. This includes the extent of contact with other animals, time spent outdoors versus indoors, travelling to other geographic locations and staying in catteries, as these factors affect your pet's risk of exposure to disease. It is these factors that will influence the type of vaccination program required for your cat.

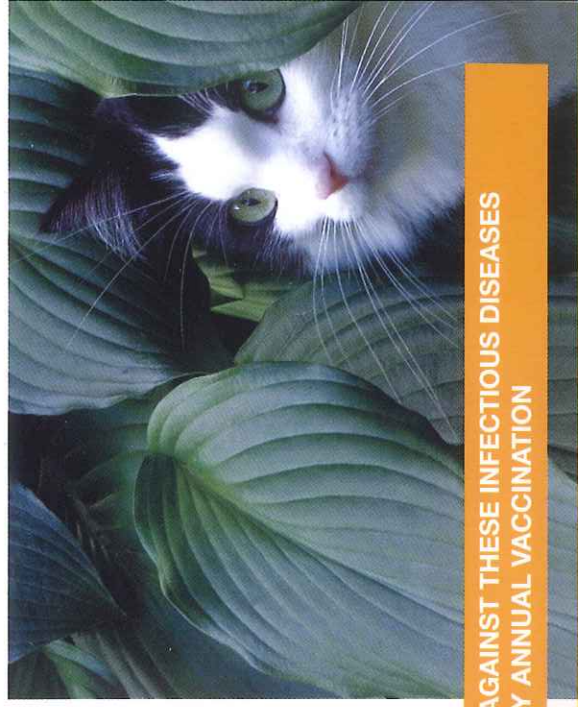
The main infectious diseases affecting cats in South Africa against which they can be protected by vaccination are:

Feline Enteritis (Panleucopenia)

- A severe and highly contagious diseases that affects cats of all ages but is most severe in kittens and young cats less than 12 months of age.
- Transmitted by direct contact with infected cats as the disease can be shed from all body secretions, particularly faeces. The disease can also be spread through an infected cat's litter tray, cage and food bowls.
- Transmission from infected queens to kittens during pregnancy can also occur. The kittens may die in-utero or can be born with co-ordination problems or other abnormalities.
- Panleucopenia attacks the gastrointestinal tract and symptoms include depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, abdominal pain and profuse, frequently bloody diarrhoea.
- Death can occur, particularly in kittens, when there is a severe decline in white blood cells and severe dehydration due to the persistent diarrhoea.
- The virus may persist in recovered cats and kittens, who may appear healthy for up to a year during which time these cats will shed the virus into the environment and infect other cats.

Feline Respiratory Disease (Calicivirus, Rhinotracheitis)

- A highly contagious disease for cats of all ages. This disease complex is almost always caused by one of two viruses, called feline calicivirus and feline rhinotracheitis virus.
- Calicivirus and rhinotracheitis virus are spread through direct contact with the saliva, discharge from the eyes and nose, and sometimes the faeces, of an infected cat. Common in multi-cat households especially since it is so easily spread from a cat or kitten coughing or sneezing.
- Symptoms include sneezing and coughing, fever, runny nose and eyes, loss of appetite and tongue ulcers. Secondary bacterial infections may also cause complications.
- In young kittens who are susceptible to infection, severe respiratory disease associated with a broncho-pneumonia may develop and be fatal.
- These viruses persist in recovered cats and kittens for several years (possibly for life) during which time those cats will shed virus into the environment and infect other cats.



THE BEST PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AGAINST THESE INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN YOUR CAT IS PROVIDED BY ANNUAL VACCINATION

Feline Leukaemia Virus

- FeLV is an important cause of tumours, anaemia suppression of the immune system and immune-mediated diseases in cats. Kittens younger than 8 weeks of age are the most susceptible to infection with the exception of those born to immunised mothers.
- Following exposure, some cats are able to mount an immune response and eliminate the virus, however some cats can remain persistently infected.
- Persistently infected cats shed the FeLV virus in secretions and represent the most important source for the spread of feline leukaemia virus. These secretions include saliva, tears, urine and nasal secretions. The disease is commonly spread by mutual grooming, biting and fighting, sneezing, or through communal feeding bowls and toys. FeLV may also be transmitted from infected queens to their kittens in-utero or through their milk.

- FeLV infection does not cause clinical signs, however a secondary disease may develop largely due to the immune suppressing effects of FeLV. Symptoms depend on the disease that develops, but may include lack of appetite, weight loss, anaemia, vomiting, diarrhoea, reproductive problems, pale or yellow mucous membranes and a high risk of developing secondary infections and tumours.



- Cats at greatest risk are outdoor cats, cats living in open multi-cat environments or in breeding colonies.

- Death can occur as quickly as 3 months or take as long as 3 years. Most feline leukaemia virus related deaths are due to the severe immune suppression caused by FeLV and the development of secondary diseases.

Rabies

- Rabies is a notifiable disease in South Africa and all cats should be vaccinated annually.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATION GUIDELINES

Kitten vaccinations should be 3 – 4 weeks apart		
Vaccination	Age	Disease
1st	8 - 10 weeks	Enteritis Respiratory disease Leukaemia Virus
2nd	12 - 14 weeks	Enteritis Respiratory disease Leukaemia Virus
3rd	16 - 18 weeks	Enteritis Respiratory disease Rabies
Annual booster	Every 12 months	Respiratory disease Leukaemia Virus Rabies

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