Feline Leukemia

What is Feline Leukemia (FeLV)?
This is a serious disease in cats, caused by a viral infection. The feline leukemia virus impairs the cat’s immune system similar to the way the AIDS virus affects humans. As a result, cats lose their ability to fight the bacteria, viruses and fungi, which cause these disease problems.

What other diseases are parts of this complex?
They include anemia, ulcers of the mouth, skin lesions, reproductive problems, and chronic digestive and respiratory problems.

How could my cat get the disease?
Feline leukemia is spread by direct contact with infected cats. It’s usually transmitted in the saliva. Licking, biting and sneezing are common forms of transmission. Food and water dishes are likely sources of infection, if healthy cats share them with infected cats.

If my cat has been in contact with other cats, how can I know whether it has been exposed to the virus?
The only sure way is to have your cat tested by your veterinarian. Because such a complex of disease problems and symptoms is involved, it’s not easy to spot the disease by how your cat looks or acts. However, certain signs—such as long-lasting infections, unexplained weight loss, reduced appetite, swollen glands, or gum problems—should alert you to a health problem that warrants a closer look by your veterinarian and possible FeLV testing.

If my cat tests positive for FeLV, what should I expect? Do some animals survive the disease?
Once a cat has been infected with feline leukemia virus, there are three possible outcomes:
1. About 40% develop immunity and become resistant to future infections.
2. About 30% become “latent carriers” of the disease, neither fully recovered nor seriously affected. They may be susceptible to the disease at some future time, and, if reactivated, they can pass on the virus to their offspring.
3. The remaining 30% of exposed cats are persistently infected and, of these, about 83% die within three years of the time of infection from leukemia and/or the associated diseases.

What should I do to prevent my cats from getting the disease in the first place?
The most obvious is to eliminate all contact with other cats. The best solution is to see your veterinarian and have your cat vaccinated with the Leukemia Vaccine.

Feline AIDS

What is Feline AIDS?
Feline AIDS is caused by infection with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). FIV causes a potentially fatal viral disease that interferes with the immune system of a cat. Cats infected with FIV may remain healthy for up to 10 years, while infected cats may show symptoms of a fever, loss of appetite, diarrhea, lethargy, and swollen lymph nodes. Eventually, the immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections. Many cats that test positive for FIV will also test positive for FeLV.

How is the disease contracted?
FIV is spread from cat to cat primarily through bite wounds, as the virus is shed in high levels through saliva. Outdoor cats are at higher risk for contracting the disease. Even though this feline virus is related to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), no human has ever been reported to be infected with FIV.