

Feline Vaccinations

Core Vaccines

FVRCP aka Feline Distemper Vaccine: Cats do not get distemper however this vaccine is still called “feline distemper” to use familiar terms with dogs. This vaccine protects against a series of diseases; Feline Rhinotracheitis virus, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia virus.

Rhinotracheitis virus: This disease causes eye and nasal discharge, fever, sneezing, and ulcers of the eye.

Calicivirus: This virus causes similar symptoms as Rhinotracheitis; however, this disease can also cause painful ulcers in the mouth and throat.

Panleukopenia virus: This virus is very similar to parvovirus in dogs, as it can cause severe fever, diarrhea, and vomiting, leading to life threatening dehydration, weakness, and sepsis.

Rabies Vaccine: In Pennsylvania, the Rabies vaccine is required in all cats spending at least 50% of their time indoors with humans. This is because Rabies is always fatal in warm blooded animals, including humans. The Rabies virus is transferred from infected saliva into a wound through biting or scratching. The virus then travels through the nervous system, resulting in brain and spinal cord inflammation and difficulty swallowing. This causes tell-tale signs of aggression, abnormal behavior, and foaming at the mouth. Once physical symptoms are seen, death occurs shortly after.

*Although there is a three-year Rabies vaccine available and used by some veterinarians, BVH does not carry or recommend this vaccine. This is due to the possible increased risk of injection site tumors. Although very rare, injection site sarcomas are very aggressive and often require amputation or other radical surgery for removal. Therefore, feline Rabies vaccinations will only be valid for one year at BVH.

Non-Core Vaccines

FeLV aka Feline Leukemia: Feline Leukemia is a viral disease that causes cancer of the white blood cells. This disease causes many, non-specific symptoms of illness and can result in death. It is spread through saliva-to-saliva contact, such as grooming or bites.

We recommend this vaccine to any cat that has unattended access to the outdoors or lives in a house with indoor/outdoor cats. Cats that are shown or bred may be required to have this vaccine as do some boarding kennels. At BVH we vaccinate based on risk level for each individual patient.

Although there are other non-core vaccines available for cats, such as FIP and Chlamydia, their reliability and effectiveness are questionable.

There was a vaccine for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, FIV, available and it was highly used for some time, however, patients that were vaccinated did cross react on the FIV test and show as positive. Because of this the vaccine is no longer recommended.

Vaccine Reactions

Vaccines are typically given under the skin and cause minimal reactions in patients. It is normal to feel a small lump in the area it was given for a few hours up to a few days after.

Like humans, some pets become tired, develop a low-grade fever, or feel sore for 24-48 hours after vaccination. Many show no signs at all. All of these are not reaction to the vaccines, but instead are the symptoms of a normal immune response.

Vaccine reactions typically occur 15 minutes to a few hours after administration of the vaccine. Some of the more common vaccine reactions include vomiting and diarrhea, unsteadiness or collapse, facial swelling, hives, or swellings all over body, difficulty breathing. If any of these symptoms are noted, please contact your veterinarian immediately. If the symptoms are mild, they may be treated at home with antihistamines such as Benadryl and rest. Severe symptoms will require care by the veterinary staff. If vaccine reactions occur, the veterinarian will decide the best course of action to prevent reactions in future vaccinations.