



Core vaccines are recommended for all cats either because the disease the vaccine protects against is extremely severe and/or is especially common, or the disease is a threat to humans. Non-core vaccines are recommended only for those cats whose life-styles or living situations place them at risk for the disease in question.

For cats, core vaccines include feline panleukopenia, feline calicivirus, feline rhinotracheitis (also known as feline herpesvirus), and rabies.

Feline calicivirus and feline rhinotracheitis are the two viruses most commonly responsible for upper respiratory infections in cats. They are common viruses and almost all cats will be exposed to them at some point in their life.

Feline panleukopenia is a parvovirus that can prove to be fatal for infected cats, especially young cats. The disease is often called feline distemper, although this name is, in fact, a bit of a misnomer.

Rabies is a fatal disease that is contagious not only to other animals but to people as well. This vaccination is required by Washington State law.

Non-core vaccines include feline leukemia (FeLV). FeLV is a viral disease that attacks the immune system and leaves the cat vulnerable to a host of secondary infections. Because transmission usually occurs through contact with other felines, those cats that live in multi-cat households or are allowed to roam outdoors are particularly at risk.

Our veterinarians recommend kittens be started on vaccinations at 8 weeks old. Vaccines are available that protect against feline panleukopenia, feline calicivirus, feline rhinotracheitis, and feline leukemia all in one vaccination. This vaccination should be repeated at 12 weeks old, 16 weeks old, and then repeated every 1-3 years. Rabies vaccines can be given at 12 weeks old. Then repeated every 1-3 years. For adult cats, you should consult with your veterinarian concerning the proper vaccination interval.