



Vaccinations for New Kittens



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



Why are vaccinations important?

Young animals have immature immune systems with limited defenses against viruses and bacteria that are everywhere in the environment. These infectious agents can cause serious problems in young animals and can even be passed to adult cats in the same household. When kittens are born they derive some temporary immunity through their mothers' milk. By 12 weeks of age this immunity wanes and the kitten needs to form its own protection. By vaccinating our kittens with a weak infection we can prevent them from contracting serious infections. Most vaccinations are used against viral diseases because specific antiviral treatments are not readily available and are often very expensive.

What do we vaccinate against?

Routinely kittens are vaccinated with two vaccinations at nine and twelve weeks of age. They then require a yearly booster. This vaccination is required by most catteries and boarding kennels.

Feline Panleukopenia

This is the most widespread and contagious cat disease. It can be transmitted through blood, urine, faeces, and mucus. It causes a severe and often fatal gastro enteritis, symptoms include:-

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea

Feline Rhinotracheitis

This disease attacks the upper respiratory tract, is highly contagious to cats of all ages. The symptoms are:-

- Sneezing
- Inflammation of the eyes
- Fever

Feline Calicivirus

This disease attacks the lungs and lower respiratory tract and in some cases cause ulceration of the tongue and mouth, it is highly contagious and is spread by sneezing. It is often accompanied by other infections.

Optional vaccinations

The other vaccination we offer is against Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) also known as Feline Aids. FIV is a virus that attacks the immune system of cats. It cannot be transmitted to humans. It is thought that up to 18% of cats in New Zealand are infected with FIV. The virus is present in the blood and saliva of infected cats and the most common method of transmission is by bite wounds during catfights. It is only rarely spread through casual contact between an infected and non-infected cat. The highest incidence of the disease is in entire male cats that are free roaming, as these are the cats that are most likely to be involved in fights.

A cat infected with FIV may have no clinical symptoms for many years. The virus eventually weakens the immune system causing the cat to become susceptible to a wide variety of illnesses. It will become unable to fight infection as efficiently taking longer than normal to recover if ill.

Kittens under 6 months require a course of three vaccinations three weeks apart followed by yearly boosters. Adult cats over six months of age require a simple blood test for FIV before the vaccination process is started. The test takes about 10 minutes and can be run before the first injection is given.



Are vaccines safe?

The risk of severe vaccination reactions is generally very low. Some cats experience mild reactions at the injection site, a small lump may form, which can be mildly painful. Rarely, generalized reactions can occur, the animal may be quiet, lethargic and off its food for twenty four hours after vaccination. If you have any concerns after vaccination then you should contact the clinic.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by exposing the body's immune system to a modified infectious agent. The agent is modified in such a way that it does not cause disease. The immune system produces antibodies against the infectious agent. The body then "remembers" the infectious agent and if it is ever encountered again it can mount a very rapid and strong immune response preventing development of the disease.

Will my cat always be protected?

Vaccination will protect the majority of cats but in some situations vaccine breakdowns will occur. High levels of maternal antibodies, derived from the mother while suckling, can block the vaccine preventing it from stimulating the immune system. Maternal antibodies usually decline below protective levels after twelve weeks so giving the second vaccination at twelve weeks or older ensures that most vaccinations will take. Viruses change over time and very virulent strains can cause disease in vaccinated animals. Some cats can become infected before the vaccination programme commences or may be virus carriers. Vaccination will not work in these kittens.

Generally vaccinations will not give life-long protection. Regular boosters will be required to maintain immunity. Visits to PET-VET for booster vaccinations is an ideal time to give your cat a thorough health check. Often undiagnosed conditions will be identified at these visits.

It is also a good idea to get booster vaccinations if your cat will be exposed to other cats or stress such as visiting a Boarding cattery, changing location or travelling.

At PETVET we can provide recommendations on the requirement of booster vaccinations for your cat.

CLINIC LOCATIONS

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