

FELINE LEUKEMIA AND FELINE "AIDS" TESTING

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WHAT IS A FELV AND FIV TEST?

The feline leukemia (FeLV) and FIV test is a blood test used to detect exposure to or infection of one of these viruses. The feline leukemia test is often called the "Feleuk" test or abbreviated as "FeLV" test. The feline immunodeficiency virus test is also referred to as the FIV test or feline "AIDS" test. These tests can be run individually but are most commonly run together.

FeLV and FIV should be run on all cats with any concurrent illness or if a recent FeLV/FIV status has not been established. This test is also recommended on any new cat that is coming into the household.

There are no real contraindication to performing this test. Negative results help determine health or exclude disease.

WHAT DOES A FELINE LEUKEMIA AND FELINE "AIDS" TEST REVEAL?

Cats not infected or exposed to these viruses will be negative.*

The feline leukemia test is a blood test that detects antigens to the virus. Two different tests are commonly used, the ELISA (enzyme linked immunosorbent assay) and the IFA (immunofluorescent antibody test). The ELISA test requires blood, saliva or tears and is commonly performed in most veterinary offices. The test is often combined as a feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus test kit. The IFA test is often used to confirm a positive ELISA result and is sent to a qualified diagnostic laboratory. The IFA test requires a blood or bone marrow sample.

The feline immunodeficiency virus test is a blood test that detects antibodies to the virus. Three different tests can be used, the ELISA, IFA and the Western blot. As mentioned, the ELISA test requires a blood sample and is commonly performed in most veterinary offices. The IFA or Western blot tests are often used to confirm a positive ELISA test and are sent to a qualified diagnostic laboratory.

Healthy cats should not be euthanized based on one positive leukemia test result. There are several contingencies in interpretation of this test that make it complicated. Healthy cats that test positive should be isolated from other cats in the household and retested in 3 months. Exposure to the virus does not necessary mean that the cat will become infected with the virus.

How Is a Feline Leukemia and Feline "AIDS" Virus Test Done?

Feline leukemia and feline "AIDS" virus testing involves obtaining a blood sample.

After drawing a blood sample, the blood is immediately placed in a glass container with a substance that prevents clotting of the sample. A specific amount of blood is combined with a chemical and this combination is placed on a commercially available feline leukemia and feline "AIDS" test. The fluid spreads across filter paper impregnated with specific antigens and antibodies. A positive result will be indicated by a color change or line developing at a set point on the paper. This test works under the same principle as at-home pregnancy tests for women.

Most veterinary hospitals have the kits and instruments to perform a feline leukemia and feline "AIDS" virus test in their hospital although some veterinarians prefer to send the blood to an outside laboratory for analysis.

The ELISA test generally takes 10 to 20 minutes to perform. The IFA is sent to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory and takes 1 to 2 days to obtain results.

IS A FELINE LEUKEMIA AND FELINE "AIDS" VIRUS TEST PAINFUL?

A feline leukemia and feline "AIDS" test is a blood test. In order to obtain a blood sample, a needle must be passed through the skin and into a blood vessel. As with humans, the pain involved regarding a needle will vary from individual to individual but is no more painful than any injection.

IS SEDATION OR ANESTHESIA NEEDED FOR A FELINE LEUKEMIA AND FELINE "AIDS" VIRUS TEST?

Sedation or anesthesia is not needed for a feline leukemia and feline "AIDS" test.

PLEASE NOTE: POSITIVE TITERS TO FIV CAN OCCUR FROM SOME VACCINATIONS. THIS CAN PRODUCE A POSITIVE TEST RESULT. IF YOUR CAT TESTS POSITIVE TO FIV AND IS NOT SICK, PLEASE DETERMINE IF YOUR CAT HAS BEEN VACCINATED RECENTLY. TITERS TO THE VACCINE CAN OCCUR FOR UP TO 13 MONTHS AFTER VACCINATION.