

# FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS

## FeLV

Usdan Institute  
for Animal  
Health Education

**AMC**  
SINCE 1910  
ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

### What is it?

- One of the most common infectious diseases in cats.
- Affects 2-3% of all cats in the U.S.
- Can be spread from cat-to-cat through grooming, biting, or nursing. It is less commonly spread through the food bowl or litter box.
- Pregnant cats can transmit the virus to unborn kittens.
- It is seen more often in outdoor cats and cats who live with a FeLV+ positive cat.

### What are the signs?

- Anemia (low red blood cell count)
- Frequent infections
- Diarrhea
- Reproductive problems
- Skin problems
- Cancer: lymphoma

### How is it diagnosed?

- Several different tests exist, talk to your veterinarian about which one is right for your cat.
- The most common test is a blood test that looks for a certain protein on the FeLV virus.
- An initial positive test should be confirmed with a second test. Results for the second test may take longer to come back.

### Can it be treated?

- There is no cure for FeLV.
- Some cats can clear the infection on their own.
- Infected cats can live months or even years after they start showing signs of illness.
- Treatment is for other related medical problems, such as reduced appetite and nausea.

### Can it be prevented?

- Spaying and neutering cats helps reduce roaming and the chance of becoming infected.
- FeLV+ cats should be kept indoors to prevent spread to other cats and prevent the FeLV+ cat from being exposed to other infections.
- In the household, FeLV+ cats should be separated from FeLV- cats and FeLV- cats in the household should be vaccinated.
- The available vaccine is 98% effective. Talk to your veterinarian to see if it is right for your cat.

### What should I do if my cat is FeLV+?

- See a veterinarian every 6 months and make sure he/she knows your cat is FeLV+.
- Feed a wholesome, nutritious, balanced diet.
- Provide all core vaccinations.
- Keep indoors or with access to an enclosed outdoor space.
- Reduce or prevent exposure to cats with unknown health or vaccine status.
- Monitor closely for signs of illness.