

**K.C. CAT CLINIC**  
**7101 Main Street**  
**Kansas City, MO 64114**  
**Phone (816) 361-4888**  
**kccatclinic.com**

## **VACCINATIONS - BENEFITS AND RISKS**

Vaccines play an important role in protecting our pets against disease; however, vaccines can also cause problems in certain individuals. Though it is rare for cats to have problems from vaccines, reactions can occur. Therefore, it is important to evaluate which vaccines YOUR cat needs. This decision is based on the environment (if your cat goes outdoors, if 1 or more cats are in the household, etc.), his/her overall health, and the chance that he/she will come down with a specific disease.

The best health care that you can provide for your cat is to make sure that a physical examination is done at least once every year to help keep him or her healthy! At the annual exam, we will work with you to determine what vaccines your cat needs.

### **Benefits of Vaccines**

The following vaccines can help prevent infectious diseases in cats, and are recommended in accordance with the latest recommendations (January 1997) of the American Association of Feline Practitioners:

**Rabies:** Vaccination is approximately 100% effective in preventing rabies, a disease that most always causes death, and can be transmitted from animals to humans. Vaccination is required by local ordinance. Kansas City, Missouri and the Kansas communities will recognize a 3-year duration product. As of 6/01, Lee's Summit and Independence do not accept 3-year rabies vaccinations. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding the requirements of your community.

**The "Distemper" Vaccine (3 in 1):** The Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calici, and Panleukopenia are combined together in one vaccine.

**Rhinotracheitis and Calici Viruses:** Vaccination against these two main upper respiratory viruses help protect against severe respiratory infections. Cats still will get "colds". This vaccine was designed to help prevent the life threatening pneumonias that can develop from these viruses.

**Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper):** Vaccination is approximately 100% effective in preventing this disease which can cause severe vomiting and diarrhea, dehydration, destruction of white blood cells, and death. This disease has almost been eliminated from household cats because of widespread vaccination.

### **Forms of the 3 in 1 vaccine**

There are two forms of this vaccine: injectable or intranasal (administered into the eyes and nose). The benefit of using the injectable vaccine is that it is easier to administer and does not cause any sneezing. The intranasal vaccine provides better protection, decreases the chance of an immediate, severe reaction, and has no related vaccine-induced cancer is associated with it. Cats will sometimes sneeze after being given this product.

**Feline Leukemia Virus:** Vaccination is recommended for cat's at-risk: cats that go outdoors and cats exposed to other cats, for example, on a screened in porch. The vaccine is NOT 100% effective, so annual testing is recommended for those cats at risk.

**Feline Infectious Peritonitis:** Although a vaccine exists, it has questionable efficacy, and may be of use in catteries where FIP is a problem.

### **Risks of Vaccines:**

There is an increasing awareness of reactions associated with vaccines. The following information is not meant to alarm you, but help educate you so that if a vaccine reaction does occur, you can be prepared to help your cat. Plan to be home with your cat for about an hour after vaccinations are given. Immediate allergic reactions can occur during this time. Please call right away if your cat shows any of these signs:

**Immediate Reactions (15 minute to 24hours after vaccine):**

Vomiting and/or diarrhea (often more than 1 time)  
Trouble breathing  
Swelling of the feet and ears  
Severe itching, frequently seen as excessive licking or shaking of feet  
Salivating, drooling or panting  
Excessive listlessness

**The Variation In How Cats Will Respond To Vaccines:**

As the body acts on the vaccine given, sometimes the cat will actually act ill as its immune system is being turned on. Just like when you get a flu shot, sometimes you don't feel so great for a day or two. Any signs should be mild and if you feel that your cat is showing a lot of lethargy, please call.

The intranasal vaccine will cause sneezing in a fair number of cats. The sneezing usually starts 5 - 7 days after it is given. The cats usually do not act sick, but you will sure hear them for several days. If symptoms are severe or you notice any other changes in your cat (appetite loss, listlessness), please call us.

**Delayed reactions (weeks to months later):**

Please check areas where the injectable vaccines have been given for lumps which can form weeks to months after a vaccine has been given. It is not uncommon for cats to develop a lump 1-2 weeks after a vaccine has been given. This type of lump should begin to decrease in size approximately 2 weeks after it develops and be gone by 12 weeks. If the lump does not get smaller, is red or painful, we should see your cat and evaluate the lump. Some reports suggest that 1 in 10,000 cats may develop a tumor where a vaccine was given, while others feel that it may be more frequent. These tumors occur rarely, but they are very serious. *If a lump forms more than three weeks after vaccines have been given, it is probably just a benign lump caused by local reaction to the vaccine, but we must evaluate it to know for sure.* If the unusual occurs and it is a tumor, early treatment is the best you can do for your cat. Please call as soon as possible to have a lump checked.

**Note:** Any cat can have a reaction to a vaccine even if they have never had problems in the past. It is important to monitor for reactions in every cat each time a vaccine is given.

The KC Cat Clinic is committed to providing the best care possible for your cat by continually educating our clients and ourselves.