

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) Testing Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does the Feline Leukemia Virus test for? What does a positive test mean?
 - A. FeLV tests are checking for **antigen** to the Feline Leukemia Virus. This antigen occurs once the virus has entered the body. A positive test means the cat/kitten has been exposed to Feline Leukemia Virus. However, some cats can actually clear the infection.

2. What does the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus test for? What does a positive test mean?
 - A. FIV tests are testing for **antibodies** to the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. Positive tests in adult cats, typically indicate active infection. Positive tests in kittens, are usually simply from maternal antibodies passed from mother to kitten. Most kittens will revert to negative status once the maternal antibodies have cleared their immune system. This typically happens between 4-6 months. For this reason, we recommend positive kittens be retested at 6 months of age to determine true FIV status.

3. Why do we not always test all kittens in a litter before sending to foster?
 - A. In some cases, kittens are very distressed by the intake process. While our staff follows Fear Free procedures, some kittens are just too frightened, panicked or stressed to safely get a blood sample. We try to make sure at least one kitten in a litter (or mom) has been tested before sending to foster. The exception to this is bottle kittens.

4. Why don't you test bottle babies?
 - A. These kittens are much too small and fragile to safely attempt a blood draw. We typically plan to test kittens once they are over 1 pound in weight.

5. Is it safe to let foster kittens interact with our other cats?
 - A. No. It isn't safe for your cats and it isn't safe for our foster kittens. Foster kittens frequently come from county animal shelters or from unknown circumstances. For that reason, we do not know if they could have infectious diseases. Foster kittens are also immune compromised and should never be exposed to your personal cats. Even healthy adult cats could be shedding viruses and could cause serious illness in kittens.