

## Calicivirus Vaccine Available for Cats

*By Gary D. Norsworthy, DVM, DABVP*

Fort Dodge Animal Health recently released a new vaccine that protects cats against the calicivirus and A virulent systemic feline calicivirus (VS-FCV) -- also known as the killer calici or the hemorrhagic calici -- that mutated from the feline calicivirus.

When I started studying about this virus, it seemed rare, with only nine documented outbreaks from 1998 to 2003. Despite the uncommon occurrences, the outbreaks were alarming. In a Los Angeles outbreak, 54 cats became infected. The disease is more severe in adult cats, with about 60 percent of affected adult cats dying.

The really good news is that Fort Dodge Animal Health has recently released a new vaccine that protects cats against the regular calicivirus and against the Killer Calici. Ask your veterinarian about having your cat protected against this deadly virus.

Symptoms include facial swelling and leg swelling, especially over joints. Hair loss and skin ulcerations also are common. In some cats, the disease attacks the internal organs including the lung, pancreas and liver; these cats die within days. The virus sheds in nasal, ocular and oral secretions and in stools. It also is found in sloughed hair and skin. Shedding continues for at least four months following recovery.

In most documented outbreaks the epidemic traces back to a single cat in which the mutation occurred. Often, this is a shelter or cattery cat. The virus spreads easily on the skin and cloths of those caring for the sick cats and on inanimate objects, such as stethoscopes, feeding syringes and medicine bottles.

Control of an outbreak requires strict isolation of affected and exposed cats, as well as aggressive disinfection of facilities and equipment. Bleach (1-part bleach and 32-parts water) is the most effective agent for killing the virus.

Ask your veterinarian about having your cat protected against this deadly virus.