

FRCP Vaccine

A vet explains the basics about the FRCP vaccine.

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.

Q. What is the FRCP vaccine?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: The letters stand for feline rhinotracheitis, calici, and panleukopenia. This is the cat vaccine that all cats should receive as kittens, and then on a schedule as adults. It is also called the three-way vaccine because it protects against three diseases.

Feline panleukopenia is a virus that is usually fatal to infected cats. It is shed in feces, transmitted through fecal-oral contact, and spreads through poor hygiene. It can contaminate cages, eating bowls, and litterboxes. Most vaccines containing this virus stimulate complete protective immunity. Clinical signs associated with panleukopenia include fever, anorexia, vomiting, or diarrhea. The most characteristic laboratory finding is an extremely low white blood cell count. Death can be rapid due to severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalances.

Feline herpesvirus (feline rhinotracheitis) and feline calicivirus are estimated to cause up to 90 percent of upper respiratory disease cases in cats. These diseases are rarely fatal but are extremely prevalent. Transmission occurs through sneezing and aerosol spread of droplets, by direct contact, and by contaminated objects. Common signs of these diseases include sneezing, anorexia, and conjunctivitis (inflammation of the mucosal tissue around the eye). Cats can develop chronic herpesvirus infections that cause long-term, intermittent bouts of sneezing and conjunctivitis. Feline calicivirus infection can also cause limping or severe gum disease. Vaccination against these viruses does not prevent infection, but it does reduce the severity of the associated clinical symptoms. In addition to the traditional form of vaccination (an injection), a topical vaccination is available for these viruses. Topical vaccines may be administered in an intranasal (in the nose) or intraocular (in the eye) manner.

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