



## *FIV & FeLV Testing Policy*

Due to the fact that routinely screening healthy animals has a high risk of false positive and false negative results, our current housing standards, the significant expense of testing, and in keeping with best practices in animal sheltering and veterinary medicine, ***as of January 20th, 2021, PAWS no longer routinely tests cats for FIV and FeLV.***

There are of course circumstances when cats will/can be FIV/FeLV tested, following our updated protocols (more details below). **We ask that you take the time to understand the reasoning for the change and new procedures, both as a valued foster parent, and as a representative of PAWS in the community when communicating with adopters.**

**Resources:** Below you will find detailed information about our new policy and procedures.

- [FeLV Talking Points](#) to help you feel comfortable with this change and navigate conversations with adopters (also listed below).
- [FeLV+ FAQ](#) for foster parents and adopters to learn all about FeLV (also listed below).
- [UW Shelter Medicine Program Q&A](#) outlining why shelters are no longer testing for FIV/FeLV
- [FeLV Webinar recording](#): Presented by our Medical Director, Dr. Carrie Childs, our Operations Director, Natalie Smith, and our Foster Manager, Tammy Miller.

**Foster Space & Testing:** We require that foster cats have their own secure space in the foster home where they can be safely separated from resident pets. We encourage foster parents to focus on the foster cat's needs and finding an adopter. **If, after at least 2 weeks of separation, a foster parent wishes to introduce and mingle their resident cats with their foster cat,** they should ensure their cats AND the foster cat have been tested for FIV/FeLV. If a foster parent's resident cats were previously combo tested and have remained indoors-only, without exposure to other cats of unknown FeLV history or to a known FeLV+ cat, they then may be permitted to introduce their resident cat(s) to their PAWS foster animal **after** their PAWS foster cat has been tested negative for FeLV. ***The FIV/FeLV test costs \$20 for foster parents and adopters at PAWS.***

**FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus)** is a virus specific to cats that attacks and weakens a cat's immune system. Cats with FeLV can live normal, happy lives— though with a shorter life expectancy than cats without FeLV. FeLV is spread between cats through grooming, nursing, sharing food or water bowls, sharing litter boxes, fighting, or mating. Transmission requires cats to be in close contact, sharing saliva or other bodily fluids. The FeLV virus does not survive for long in the environment, making it hard to spread through indirect contact, and easy to disinfect your home after having an FeLV+ foster cat.

**FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)** is a virus specific to cats and is transmitted mostly through bite wounds. In rare cases, FIV is transmitted from infected queens to offspring during birth or through infected milk. FIV can weaken the immune system and cause illness, so cats positive for FIV need to see a vet routinely and immediately when they are ill. Effective management entails keeping cats indoors and away from potentially infected cats that are likely to bite. *In households with stable cat social structures, FIV+ cats are able to safely live with non-infected cats.* **Learn more from our [FIV FAQ!](#)**