



Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

Talking Points

for Foster Parents & Volunteers

Why is PAWS no longer routinely testing all cats for FIV/FeLV?

- The prevalence of these viruses is low (~2-3%).
- The virus is short-lived in the environment and easy to kill with routine disinfectants.
- Transmission is unlikely in our shelter where nearly all cats are housed individually. We can control which animals we house together and can test only as-needed.
- False positive results could increase length of stay for a cat that is actually negative.
- False negative results give a false sense of security at a large financial cost.
- Testing all cats, regardless of risk or indication for disease, is extremely costly. Cost savings from targeted testing can be reinvested into the general shelter medicine program, saving more lives.

Which cats will PAWS test for FIV/FeLV?

- Unrelated cats that are co-housed in order to increase socialization among poorly socialized cats.
- A cat that is placed into a foster home with unrelated cats specifically for socialization requiring integration into the household. This will be determined by a PAWS lifesaving department manager or Director of Operations.
- A cat presents for intake from a high-risk transmission area, such as a hoarding situation. The animal should be quarantined and testing should occur 60 days after the last possible FeLV exposure, which is usually the date of intake.
- A cat presents for intake with a bite wound. The animal should be quarantined and testing should occur 60 days after the last possible FeLV exposure, which is usually the date of intake.
- Cats with persistent upper respiratory infections (infection that is not responsive to 3 rounds of different antibiotics OR has persisted for more than 60 days).
- **All other cats can be tested at the request, and expense of a foster parent or adopter.**

Other things to note about testing:

- **The test will cost \$20 for foster parents/adopters/rescue partners and \$25 for clinic clients.**
- Petsmart Charities does not require cats placed at their adoption centers to be tested for FIV/FeLV.
- PAWS will not test one kitten as a proxy for an entire litter. Best practice recommendation is to test each kitten in a litter individually when indicated.
- To accompany this change in protocol, we will exclusively use the Idexx SNAP FIV/FeLV test, the most accurate test available.
- For cats who have been FeLV tested, repeat testing should occur 60 days after last known potential FeLV exposure. If a testing is recommended by our veterinarian for any of the reasons listed above, we can cover the cost of the 2nd test, but we encourage adopters to have it done at their regular veterinarian, as these types of cats are likely going to need additional follow-up care.
- If a cat tests positive on a single test, the cat must be quarantined for 60 days from the last known potential FeLV exposure. If the cat is in foster care at the end of the 60 day period, a second test should be run to confirm positive status. If the cat is adopted, the adopters should have a second test

performed at the end of the 60 day period. This test should be performed at their own veterinarian and before introducing that cat to any other cats.

Should adopters get their cats tested?

- Yes! We are still recommending that all cats are tested as soon as possible after adoption.
- The test can be done at PAWS at time of adoption OR with the adopter's veterinarian. Adopters can come in through Foster Walk-In Clinic (Grays Ferry Ave) within 21 days of adoption, or through a vaccine clinic appointment (Grays Ferry Ave or Grant Ave) to have FIV/FelV testing performed.
- The adopter is responsible for the cost of the test, regardless of when the cat is tested, through what type of appointment, and regardless of test result
- If a confirmed adopter would like the cat tested before the adoption is finalized, you as the foster can have your foster cat tested at Foster Walk-In Clinic or through a Curbside Appointment. **The test cost should be added to the adoption fee.**

Should foster parents get their cats tested?

- **PAWS has always recommended that foster parents keep their resident cats separate from their foster cats after bringing the foster cat into the home.**
- Foster parents should focus on getting their foster cat adopted into a permanent home. Introducing fosters to resident cats is risky for many reasons, including the potential for disease transmission and stressful cat interactions that could result in injury.
- If, after at least 2 weeks of separation, a foster parent is going to mingle their resident cats with the foster cat, they should get their cats AND the foster cat tested.

Will adopters receive counseling about FeLV testing and vaccinating?

- PAWS adoption counselors and foster coordinators will review FIV/FelV during counseling and will stress the importance of FeLV testing to potential adopters and to fosters.
- Foster parents and volunteers that help with the adoption process should be comfortable explaining FeLV disease transmission, risk factors for infection, severity of disease if acquired, vaccination, and testing options for adopters. See PAWS FeLV FAQ.
- As outlined above, PAWS can provide FeLV testing to fosters and adopters upon request, with the foster or adopter being responsible for the cost of the test. **As an alternative, PAWS recommends that adopters have their new pet seen by a primary veterinarian within 60 days of adoption for testing.**
- The American Association of Feline Practitioners recommends vaccination under certain circumstances for certain populations of cats, if you are concerned PAWS recommends talking to your veterinarian about the risks and benefits of the vaccine.

PAWS FeLV+ Adoption Program! Can you foster an FeLV+ cat?

As we've been doing for multiple years, PAWS will also continue taking in one of the most vulnerable pet populations, FeLV+ cats, through our rescue transfer and community surrender programs. PAWS is committed to finding homes for currently healthy cats living with FeLV through our adoption program. While it is impossible to know how long a cat with FeLV will remain healthy, PAWS believes that any length of time in a loving home is in the best interest of the animal. We are always looking for foster homes for FeLV+ cats so please let us know if you can help!