

American Assn. Of Feline Practitioners / Academy of Feline Medicine
Recommendations for FeLV / FIV Testing*

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) Testing (ANTIBODY Test)

Maternally derived antibodies to FIV in kittens younger than 6 months of age confound interpretation of positive test results.

Kittens born to infected queens may test positive for antibody, yet most will not be infected.

Most cats develop antibodies to FIV within 60 days after infection. However, the time required for seroconversion is extremely variable and may be considerably longer than 60 days in some instances.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) Testing (ANTIGEN Test)

Because FeLV tests detect antigen rather than antibody, maternally derived antibodies do not influence the results of these tests.

Kittens may be tested at any age; however, infection in newborn kittens may not be detected until weeks to months after birth.

Cats should be tested prior to FeLV vaccination.

Soluble antigen tests (ELISA and other immunochromatographic tests) are most reliable when serum or plasma (rather than whole blood) is tested.

Positive results obtained with tests that detect free antigen (ELISA and immunochromatographic tests) that detect free antigen may be reflective of transient viremia.

Positive results obtained with tests (e.g., IFA test) that detect cell-associated antigen are highly likely to be reflective of persistent viremia.

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based assays...are neither standardized nor validated.

No test is 100% accurate at all times and under all conditions; therefore, all test results should be interpreted in light of the patient's health and prior likelihood of infection.

To increase the reliability of a positive soluble antigen test result, the test may be repeated using a different type of test (e.g., IFA test or another immunochromatographic test).

*The complete 2001 Report of the AAFP/AFM Advisory Panel on Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management can be found in the July 2001 issue of the Compendium on Continuing Education for the Practicing Veterinarian.