



Feline Vaccines

Kitten Vaccinations

Vaccinations or immunizations are important to help create antibodies that are needed to protect against disease. The mother cat will help to provide maternal antibodies that are delivered to the kittens through gestation and colostrum. These antibodies will last several weeks while the kitten is growing. Immunizations for Herpes virus, Calicivirus and Panleukopenia are given during a period of time that the kittens are most vulnerable while the maternal antibodies are waning, between age 8-16 weeks. The maternal antibodies will actually interfere with the self-made antibodies, called humoral antibodies, which is why a series of immunizations are required every 3-4 weeks. The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) recommends vaccines be given at approximately 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age to ensure proper antibody production, with the last vaccination being given at a minimum of 16 weeks.

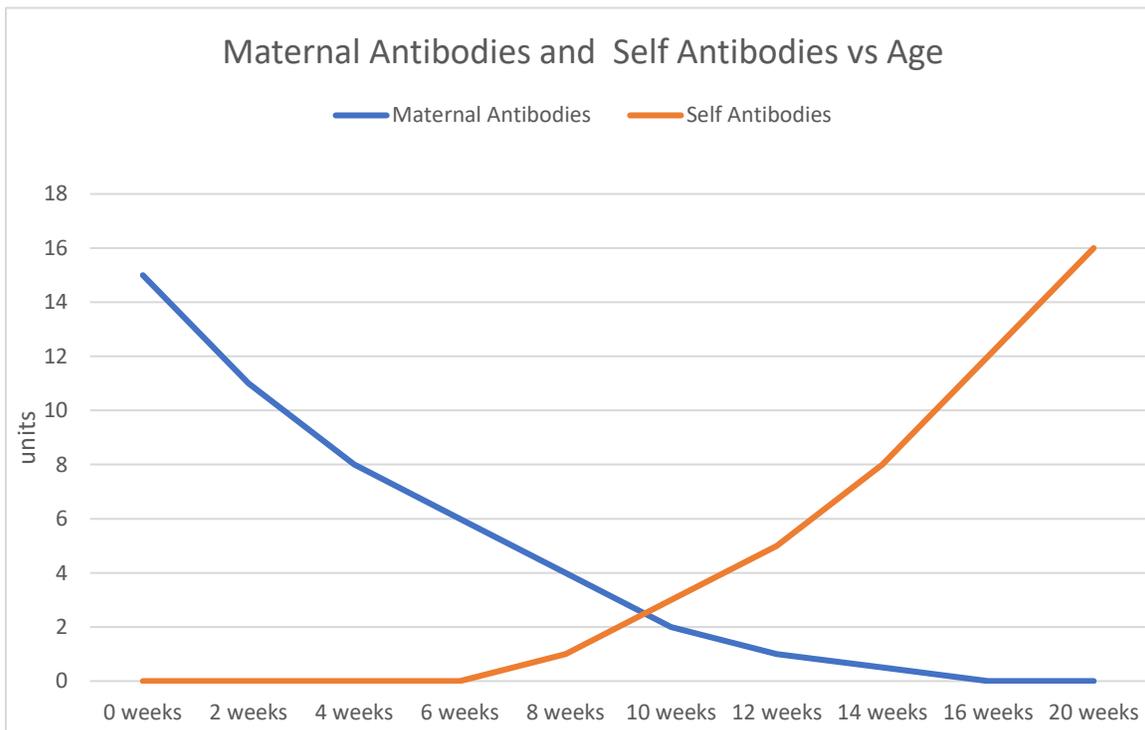


Figure 1: As the maternal antibodies decline the self antibodies from vaccines increase, protecting the kitten from disease



Feline Herpes Virus (Rhinothraheitis)

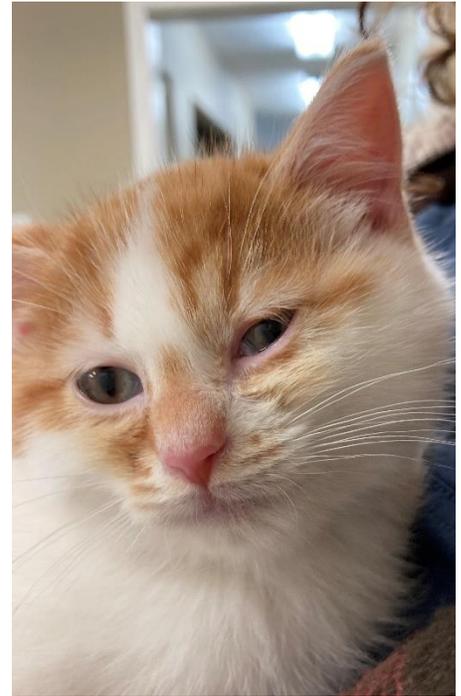
Feline Herpes virus is a very common virus that spreads very easily amongst cats. It causes upper respiratory disease such as sneezing, nasal discharge and ocular discharge. In more severe cases it will cause corneal ulcers in the eyes and allow for other respiratory infections to move in with a weakened immune system. This is recommended as a core vaccination.

Feline Calicivirus

Feline Calicivirus is also a common virus that spreads easily between cats. It causes coughing, sneezing, ocular discharge and nasal discharge. In more severe cases there may be ulcers in the mouth and secondary infections to the respiratory system from a weakened immune system. This is recommended as part of the core vaccinations.

Feline Panleukopenia

Feline Panleukopenia is a virus that spreads easily from cat to cat. It attacks rapidly dividing cells which is why growing kittens are most severely affected. The immune system, gastrointestinal system and nervous system are most severely affected resulting in weak kittens with vomiting and diarrhea. This is often fatal without intensive supportive care. Kittens that survive may have long term effects from a weakened immune system. This is recommended as part of the core vaccinations.



Rabies

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system that is spread from bites from infected animal or wildlife. Rabies is most commonly found in the bat population on Vancouver Island but can be found in raccoons, skunks, foxes or rodents in other parts of Canada. Rabies is fatal with no treatment and can be spread to people. This is recommended as part of the core vaccinations.

Feline Leukemia Virus

Feline Leukemia virus is a virus that spreads from cat to cat by saliva or nasal secretions, often through mutual grooming. This virus causes leukemia or cancer in the blood and will result in a weakened immune system which can lead to secondary infections and diseases. Kittens are recommended to be vaccinated against this virus as cats who are positive for this virus are a source of continued infection amongst the feline population. Cats with an outdoor lifestyle or cats with outdoor access are recommended to be vaccinated against feline leukemia virus.





Nanaimo Veterinary Hospital's Vaccination Protocol

Vaccine	Age of recommended vaccination
FVRCP (feline herpes virus, feline coronavirus, feline panleukopenia) This is a combination vaccine. (Core)	8 weeks 12 weeks 16 weeks 1 year Every 3 years subsequent
Rabies (Core)	16 weeks 1 year Every 3 years subsequent
Feline Leukemia (based on lifestyle)	8 weeks 12 weeks Every 2 years subsequent



Additional Reading:

<https://www.aaha.org/aaha-guidelines/2020-aahaaafp-feline-vaccination-guidelines/core-vaccines-for-pet-cats/>