

# RETROVIRUS TESTING

**Feline leukemia virus (FeLV)** and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) are among the most common infectious diseases of cats, although prevalence in the general cat population varies by geographic location and risk factors. Comprehensive data on the seroprevalence of retrovirus infections and risk factors for cats in Canada were published in 2009. The national seroprevalence for FeLV is 3.4% and FIV is 4.3%, but there is geographic variation. While these viruses are present in all of Canada, the highest prevalence for FeLV is in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Manitoba; the highest prevalence for FIV is in Newfoundland, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.

In general, the retrovirus status of all cats should be known. Guidelines for retrovirus testing of cats in Canada have been published (see figures 1-3 and Resources).

## Who should be tested for FeLV and FIV?

Cats that should be tested for FeLV and FIV include:

- At-risk cats: All sick cats, cats with bite wounds or oral disease, cats with known exposure to a retrovirus-infected cat, cats in multi-cat environments where the status of every cat is not known. Sick cats should be tested regardless of a previous negative FeLV or FIV test result.
- Newly acquired cats and kittens.
- Cats about to be vaccinated against FeLV or FIV.
- Cats at ongoing risk of infection (e.g., cats with access to outdoors) should be tested annually for FeLV and for FIV, if not FIV-vaccinated, with patient-side or referral laboratory ELISA.
- Cats in shelters are often not tested before adoption but every shelter situation is different. If the cat has been tested, the results should be provided to the new owner. If cats are not tested prior to adoption, the new owner should be made aware that testing is required as soon as possible.

## RESOURCES

Levy J, Crawford C, Hartmann K, et al. 2008 American Association of Feline Practitioners' feline retrovirus management guidelines. *J Feline Med Surg* 2008;10:300-316.

Available free at: [Cathealthy.ca/catvetsretrovirus](http://Cathealthy.ca/catvetsretrovirus)

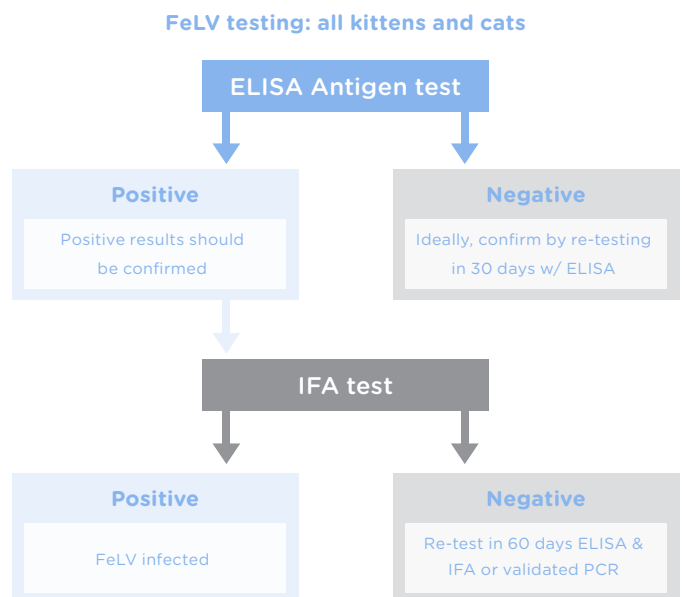
Little S, Sears W, Lachtara J, et al. Seroprevalence of feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus infection among cats in Canada. *Can Vet J* 2009;50:644-648.

Available free at: [Cathealthy.ca/seroprevalence](http://Cathealthy.ca/seroprevalence)

Little S, Bienzle D, Carioto L, et al. Feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus in Canada: recommendations for testing and management. *Can Vet J* 2011;52:849-855.

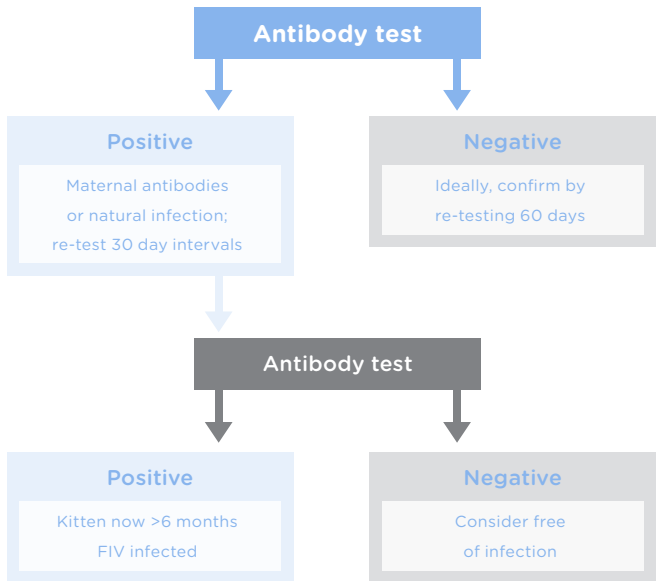
Available free at: [Cathealthy.ca/felineleukemia](http://Cathealthy.ca/felineleukemia)

**Figure 1: Algorithm for FeLV testing of all kittens and cats (Vaccination against FeLV does not interfere with testing)**



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**Figure 2: Algorithm for FIV testing of kittens under 6 months old (that have not received FIV vaccinations)**



**Figure 3: Algorithm for FIV testing of cats over 6 months old**

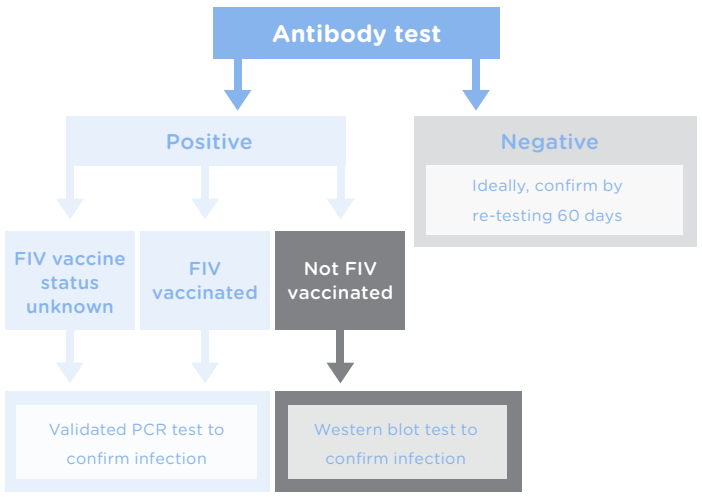


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Photo courtesy of Petsecure