

Position Statement:

FeLV and FIV Testing and Management in Animal Shelters

(Updated December 2020)

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) believes that cats should be individually considered when assessing their risk of contracting, developing, and/or transmitting Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). In general, all cats should be screened for retroviruses with the goal of optimizing individual and population health. However, FeLV and/or FIV testing of healthy feral cats in Trap-Neuter-Return programs is not recommended.¹ Furthermore, the decision to test for FeLV and/or FIV in the shelter should be based on current scientific knowledge, available shelter resources, impact on feline population health, and program goals. High-risk cats, including those entering group housing and those who are ill, should be tested.¹ For individually-housed, low-risk, healthy cats, shelters should carefully weigh disease transmission risk as well as financial and management implications of testing.

Management decisions for cats who test positive for FeLV and/or FIV on point-of-care retroviral screening tests should be based on current scientific evidence regarding test accuracy, transmission risk, and prognosis, as well as available shelter resources. Confirmatory testing of healthy cats who test positive should be performed following the most recent American Association of Feline Practitioners' guidelines.¹ The ASV does not recommend euthanasia of clinically healthy cats on the basis of a single positive test result.

Shelters caring for clinically healthy cats who test positive for FeLV and/or FIV are encouraged to seek placement with informed fosters, adopters or partnering organizations. Complete medical history, including date and type of FeLV and/or FIV test results, should be provided at the time of adoption or transfer. Adopters should be encouraged to consult with their veterinarian regarding the need for additional testing.

References

1. Little S, Levy J, Hartmann K, Hofmann-Lehmann R, Hosie M, Olah G, St Denis K. 2020 AAFP Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management Guidelines. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* (2020) 22, 5–30