



What exactly are we vaccinating for?

Distemper combination – this vaccine contains a combination of feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia. Rhinotracheitis and calicivirus cause a severe upper respiratory (nose, mouth, trachea) infection while panleukopenia (also called distemper) is a highly fatal virus that attacks multiple body systems.

Feline Leukemia – feline leukemia is very common in the wild cat population and is spread through the bite or mating of an infected cat. This virus causes an immune deficiency and can sometimes lead to cancer. Your kitten will receive this vaccine as part of the kitten boosters (regardless of whether they are indoors or outdoors) as it is very common to hear of kittens escaping outside in their early years. After 1 year of age, the doctor will assess if your cat is at risk for the disease and if they require the vaccine.

Rabies – this virus is one of the most feared diseases by veterinarians and humans alike as it is almost always fatal. Rabies attacks the brain and nervous system eventually leading to death. This disease is also zoonotic and wildlife are often the cause of domestic animals becoming infected. Federal regulations require all domestic animals to be vaccinated against rabies.

Cornell Animal Hospital has set up a vaccination protocol whereby your cat will only be vaccinated when it is necessary. For instance, after the kitten's first year of life, our distemper combination vaccine is only given once every 3 years. Even though there is a feline rabies vaccine that is labelled for 3 years on the market, we have elected to use the annual one as they are much less likely to develop a vaccine reaction. Feline leukemia needs to be done annually in order to be effective.

