



FeLV and FIV Testing in an Animal Shelter ASV Position Statement

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), in keeping with the American Association of Feline Practitioners' (AAFP) feline retrovirus management guidelines¹, believes that the Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) status of every cat should be known. Understanding that the overall incidence in the cat population is low, and that shelters do not typically experience outbreaks of these diseases; ASV also believes that it should remain the decision of each individual shelter to determine if and when retroviral screening should occur for cats in their care. While testing before adoption is ideal and strongly encouraged, each shelter's policies should be based on available resources, potential impact to population health, and program goals. Every shelter should inform adopters of the risk of these diseases including the recommendation that newly adopted cats be taken to their family veterinarian for initial screening, or retesting 60 days later if already screened at the shelter.

The AAFP feline retrovirus management guidelines¹ maintain that testing at shelter admission may be optional for singly-housed cats but is highly recommended for those in other housing designs. In situations where cats are housed in unfamiliar groups, treated for infectious diseases, and/or housed long term, shelters should strongly consider FeLV and FIV screening tests to be an essential component of the health care program.

¹American Association of Feline Practitioners' Feline Retrovirus Management Guidelines
<http://www.catvets.com/uploads/PDF/FelineRetrovirusManagementGuidelines.pdf>

Last reviewed: September 2010