

Should we test community cats for FIV and FeLV?

Guidelines released by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) advise against testing community cats for FeLV or FIV. Per the AAFP, "Although this document broadly recommends testing all cats for retroviral infection, an exception exists for feral cats in trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs. The prevalence of infection is similar in outdoor pet cats and feral cats; so feral cats do not present an increased threat to pets ([Levy et al 2006b](#)). Additionally, neutering reduces two common modes of transmission: queen to kitten for FeLV and fighting among males for both FeLV and FIV ([Levy 2000](#), [Levy and Crawford 2005](#)). Because population control of feral cats requires commitment to neutering the largest number of cats possible, many TNR programs do not routinely test feral cats ([Wallace and Levy 2006](#))."

These guidelines have been published

The national average of FeLV infection in community cat colonies is 4.3 percent, which is similar to the percentage of owned cats with FeLV. Areas with a higher TNR presence tend to have a lower occurrence of FeLV+ cats. Additionally, many FeLV tests yield a high rate of false positive test results. Due to the high cost of FeLV / FIV tests, program resources should be re-allocated to treating cats with known illness.

Cats from an established community should be spayed or neutered and returned to their community.

What to do if a healthy community cat tests positive for FIV or FeLV?

Spay or neuter the cat and return them to their community. Exposure among community cats is primarily through mating and queen-to-kitten. The community has already been exposed, and through sterilization, the only potential introduction of the virus is minimal.

What to do if a sick community cat tests positive for FIV or FeLV?

Provide the cat with appropriate veterinary care, spay or neuter the cat, and return them to their community. Contact APA if assistance is needed with a cat that is noticeably sick, injured, near death, pregnant, or otherwise in need of medical help.

Euthanasia should only be used to relieve suffering from a terminal or incurable condition.

References:

2020 AAFP Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management Guidelines. Little, S. et al 2020; Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery 22: 5-30

[2020 AAFP Retrovirus Toolkit](#), published by IDEXX