

How to Vaccinate a Cat

Sanitation and isolation alone cannot rid your shelter of viruses and bacteria. Because cats entering your shelter will be exposed to many other cats and airborne viruses, they depend on you to protect them from disease. And vaccines are among your best tools to do the job. No medical procedure is risk-free and this holds true for vaccinations, which have been linked to vaccine-associated feline fibrosarcomas (a type of malignant cancer). But your shelter shouldn't be scared into putting its vaccination program on hold. With a few precautions, you can help protect your shelter's felines from disease and minimize vaccine-associated risks.

While it's nearly impossible on paper to teach someone how to give an injection—after all, it's a medical procedure that requires hands-on training by a veterinarian—the act of vaccinating a cat involves far more than just using a needle. Follow these guidelines to protect the cats in your shelter from infectious diseases.

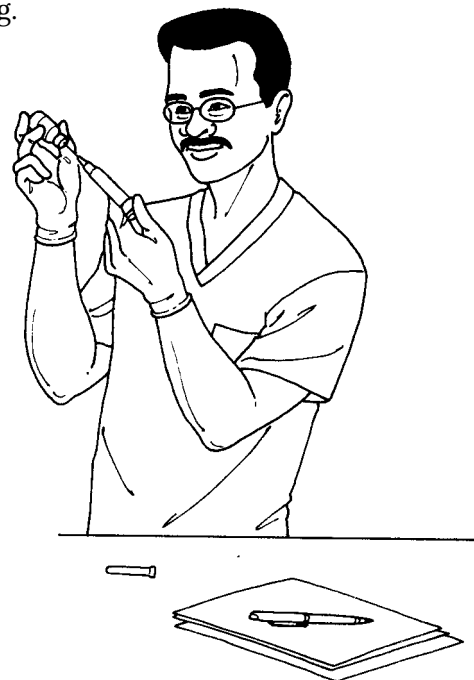


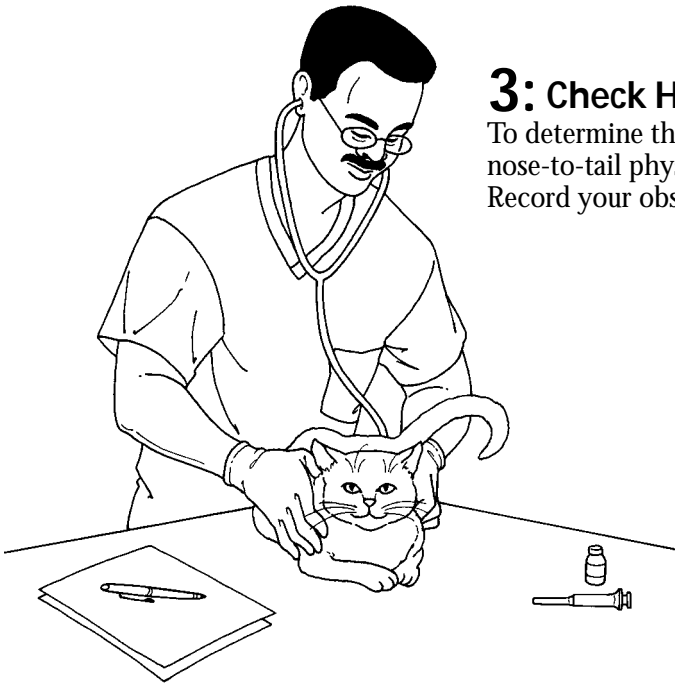
1: Create a Paper Trail

Create a log card for each incoming cat so you can record the cat's vaccination history and help to ensure that only those cats requiring vaccinations receive them. Also make a "health and behavior" cage card that follows the cat during his stay at your facility and makes it easy to monitor his well-being.

2: Use It Wisely

Store all vaccines at the temperature recommended by the manufacturer. Once vaccines have been reconstituted, use them immediately; never store them. Also, don't reuse syringes or needles because any traces of disinfectant or other vaccines may inactivate the vaccine you're using.





3: Check Him Out

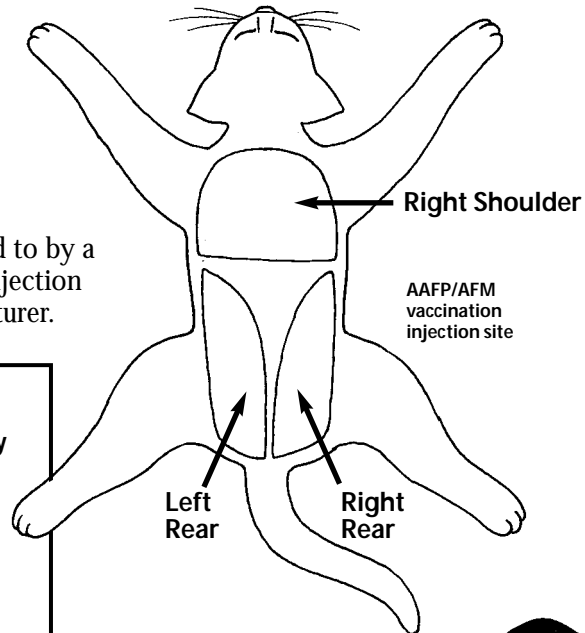
To determine the cat's health status, give the cat a thorough nose-to-tail physical examination before you inject vaccine. Record your observations carefully and systematically.

4: Become Detail Oriented

Record everything about the vaccination: the vaccine given, the date of injection, the type of vaccine used (modified-live or killed), the site and route of injection, and the vaccine manufacturer and lot serial number. Keep a copy for your records and give the adopter a copy, too.

5: Hit the Spot

Give the vaccine as you've been trained to by a veterinarian. Always use the route of injection recommended by the vaccine manufacturer.



Be sure to follow the vaccination protocol developed by the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Academy of Feline Medicine:

- ▶ Feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and chlamydia vaccines should be administered subcutaneously (SQ) on the right shoulder.
- ▶ Rabies vaccinations should be administered SQ on the right rear limb, as far down on the limb as possible.
- ▶ FeLV vaccines should be administered SQ on the left rear limb, as far down on the limb as possible.

6: Keep Watch

Pay special attention to any lumps or bumps, and advise adopters to do the same. Discovering a lump isn't necessarily cause for panic: It's common for a small, firm, painless swelling to form under the skin at the injection site, then disappear within a few weeks. But if you find anything abnormal, tell the attending veterinarian. And be sure to report any occurrences of vaccine-associated feline fibrosarcomas or other adverse reactions to the vaccine manufacturer.

