

## Better screening needed to prevent the spread of feline viral diseases in Canada

### What is this research about?

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) are two common and important causes of disease in cats. Both viruses may potentially be transmitted from one cat to another through saliva or nasal mucus.

Although the frequency of infection in the United States is fairly well studied, until recently little research had been done on how common these infections were in Canadian cat populations.

In order to develop ways to control the spread of FeLV and FIV in Canada, it is important to first understand how widespread these infections are. Several different strategies can be used to help control the spread of these viral diseases, including vaccination, routine screening for infection, and separating infected and healthy cats.

### Keywords:

Cats, felines, feline leukemia virus, feline immunodeficiency virus, screening, disease prevention.

### What you need to know:

FeLV and FIV infections were more common in Canada than in the United States, and other risk factors included sex, age, and access to outdoors.

Preventing the spread of these viral diseases will require routine screening and vaccination, and better education of veterinarians and cat-owners.

### How can you use this research?

**Veterinarians** can use this research to educate cat owners about the importance of regular testing for feline viral diseases.

**Veterinary organizations and associations** can use this research to create guidelines for testing for and preventing the spread of feline viral diseases.

## What did the researchers find?

Overall, viral infection rates were higher in Canada than in the United States, with FIV infections more common than FeLV infections. More research is needed to understand regional variation in infection rates. Factors such as the sex of the cat, other illnesses, and access to outdoors also influenced infection rates.

Several screening tests for FIV or FeLV are available, but many have not been independently tested and some suffer from low accuracy. Currently, the most effective test for FIV or FeLV infection is very difficult for veterinarians to get in Canada.

Screening for FIV and FeLV is much less frequent in Canada than in the United States, and this may be tied to factors such as screening costs, inconvenience of bringing cats in to be tested, and a lack of understanding about the consequences of infection.

## What did the researchers do?

The researchers reviewed several scientific studies that examined the state of FeLV and FIV in Canada. Some of the reviewed studies looked at how common these infections are in different parts of Canada, and between different cat populations, such as in domestic versus feral (wild) cats. Other studies compared different methods of testing for FeLV and FIV in cats, and discussed the benefits and drawbacks of each. Finally, the researchers also looked at current screening and disease management practices in Canada.

## About the University of Guelph researcher:

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