**Vaccine Protocol**

**Safety**

Our vaccines contain **modified live virus**, which means it can be very dangerous if mom or babies get any on their fur or in their mouth. You should always have **gauze** and **alcohol** ready to go in case there is a spill, which does happen sometimes, to wipe up the vaccine. **Do it immediately**, don’t let mom or babies clean it off.

**Never use the same needle** on two different cats, even from the same litter. Needles should be changed between drawing up the vaccine and injection, and a whole new syringe should be used for each cat. Needles become dull very quickly.

If you inject through the skin to the other side, make sure you only use the needle to poke twice. After that, a new needle will be needed because the needle will dull and start to hurt.

**Procedure**

It’s helpful to have two people, even after you’ve had a lot of practice. Kittens, especially, are quite squirmy and can make giving the vaccine difficult.

Have your partner hold or wrap the kitten in a towel with the leg exposed, keeping the kitten’s head pointing toward them. Vaccines should ideally be injected **top-down** so the needle is pointing down into the leg. If the injection site should have a reaction, which is rare but does happen, this position can also save the leg, and the cat’s life, should the leg need to be amputated.

**Vaccine Reactions:**

1. **Acute vaccine reactions** are rare, but recognized within a few minutes of the vaccine, and are considered an emergency.  The patient may vomit, vocalize, pass diarrhea, pant, collapse, have a seizure, experience severe facial pruritus (itching), facial swelling and difficulty breathing.  Alert the veterinarian immediately.
2. **Next day reactions** are the most common vaccine reaction, and usually recognized as a kitten that is limping and painful, grumpy or lethargic, it may have a fever or even swelling at the site of injection.  If the symptoms persist more than 24 hours, or the fever is very high, the veterinarian may decide to give SQ fluids and pain medication.
3. **Long term reactions** are very uncommon, and should be considered if the injection site has formed a mass, granuloma or has lost hair. These have to be monitored and possibly biopsied for fibrosarcoma formation.

The person giving the vaccine should stand so that the injection site is on the **opposite side** of the cat from them. (For example, if it’s a left front leg position, stand so that the right side of the cat is against you.) This way, you can reach over with both hands.

Pull up a small tent of skin from the cat’s leg and insert the needle into the tent. Pull back on the needle just a bit- if you see air coming into your syringe then you have poked through the skin. Reposition the needle until you pull back and get negative pressure (no air). Start injecting but make sure you feel and look for liquid coming out. It’s very easy to push all the way through the skin the first time. If that happens, immediately wipe it up with your alcohol and gauze and try again. At least half the shot should be injected. If you don’t think that much has made it in, they will need another shot within 24 hours.

Once you’ve injected, **pull the needle out,** and gently rub the injection site to close the skin. Re-cover the needle so you don’t poke yourself. The needle should be taken off and stored to be brought back into the shelter in a secure container for disposal.

Vaccine locations:

**FVRCP - front right leg**

**Combo (FVRCP and FeLV) - front left leg**

**FeLV - back left leg**

**SQ Fluids - the back (between the shoulder blades)**

**Vaccine schedule:**

This is also listed in your foster manual.

**Six Weeks:** Kittens get first FVRCP.

They get a booster every three weeks after until they are adopted or are 18 weeks. After 18 weeks, they just get it yearly.

**Nine weeks or surgery day:** kittens get their first FeLV. They do not get it in foster care unless they are older and have already started the series.

**Moms under a year:** They will get FVRCP booster. Both will need to be boosted once in three weeks, then yearly.

**Moms over a year and all adults:** Get only FVRCP upon intake or at the previous shelter. It is usually boosted once in three weeks and then yearly.