

New feline vaccination guidelines

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The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) convened a panel of experts to update the 2013 AAFP Feline Vaccination Advisory Panel Report. The release of the 2020 AAHA/AAFP Feline Vaccination Guidelines provides updated recommendations and the most current information for

feline vaccinations.

The Task Force approached the update with evidence-based recommendations and peer-reviewed literature on feline vaccinations. "Working together with these two organizations affords our veterinary community exposure to the wisdom of colleagues who are dedicated to increasing the standard of care for cats," said Amy ES Stone, DVM, Ph.D., Chair of the 2020 AAHA/AAFP Feline Vaccination Guidelines Task Force.

The guidelines stress the need for an expanded understanding by veterinary professionals of individualized feline risk factors to determine a proper preventive healthcare plan. Practitioners are encouraged to gain better insight into feline patients' risk factors, which may include life stage, environment, and lifestyle.

Veterinarians should use these guidelines in conjunction with their own clinical experience and expert opinion, while considering the needs of the individual patient. "Cats used to be vaccinated for certain diseases based solely on whether they went outside or not. Those times have changed," said AAHA Senior Veterinary Officer Heather Loenser, DVM. "We need to tailor vaccine protocols for individual pets, rather than basing vaccination decisions on a single factor."

"We no longer can simply ask a client if the cat is 'indoors' or 'outdoors,'" said Kelly St. Denis, MSc, DVM, DABVP (Feline Practice), and 2020 AAFP President. "A client may not correctly interpret what they might consider brief or low-risk outdoor access, which may contain information that contributes to your risk assessment. We need to ask if the cat has [free access](#) to outdoors; do they ever sit on a patio or in a cateo; do they have access to a balcony or open window; do they go anywhere outside of the home such as a friend's house or boarding facility; are they ever walked on a leash? A risk assessment of the other

cats living in the home is also critical as these risks extend to all other cats in the house. By asking these questions you can better review the cat's risk for safety, nutrition, behavior, and zoonotic disease."

The guidelines provide resources for the entire veterinary practice team to utilize including:

- A lifestyle-based feline vaccine calculator
- FAQs and tips for client and staff education
- Recommendations for core and noncore vaccines for pet and shelter-housed cats
- A webinar summarizing the must-see and clinically important sections of the guidelines (available in October)

With these new guidelines, the team can educate pet owners about vaccination protocols and the overall importance to feline wellbeing, provide proper [vaccine](#) recommendations for pet and shelter cats, and have open conversations to address clients' questions or concerns.

More information: Amy ES Stone et al, 2020 AAHA/AAFP Feline Vaccination Guidelines, *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/1098612X20941784](https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X20941784)

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