



## **FELINE PANLEUKOPENIA: THE KILLER DISEASE**

### **ABCD experts recommend three-yearly boosters**

Haarlem, 13 July 2006

A minimum interval of three years for booster vaccinations is normally sufficient to control Feline Panleukopenia, according to new Guidelines published today by the European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases (ABCD), providing initial vaccinations are given according to the recommended protocol.

Feline Panleukopenia has been notorious for wiping out local cat populations and has therefore occasionally been referred to as “the Cat Plague”. Mortality rates from this highly contagious parvovirus in susceptible cats are high and can exceed 90% in kittens.

#### **Indoor cats also at risk**

*“Indirect contact is the most common way for a cat to become infected, therefore indoor cats are at risk, too,”* according to Professor Uwe Truyen (Leipzig, Germany), ABCD member and internationally recognised specialist on parvoviruses. *“Feline Panleukopenia virus can survive in the environment for several months or even a year, as it is highly resistant, which means that cats don’t need to meet other cats to become infected.”*

#### **Recommended Vaccination Protocol**

The ABCD’s recommended vaccination protocol for feline panleukopenia consists of two kitten injections at nine and 12 weeks of age, followed by a first booster one year later. If this basic programme is carried out correctly, subsequent booster vaccinations can normally be given at intervals of a minimum of three years.

However, the ABCD stresses that maternally derived antibodies (MDAs) against feline panleukopenia virus may persist for longer than previously believed and may neutralise the vaccinal antigen, thereby preventing active immunisation. In particular, kittens from environments with a high infection pressure, such as cat shelters, or from queens that have been vaccinated regularly, for example in breeding catteries, may still have MDAs at 16 or even 20 weeks of age. In these situations, a third vaccination at four months is recommended.

In adult cats with an unknown vaccination history, a single injection followed by a booster after one year is sufficient. Thereafter, boosters may be given at intervals of three years or longer.

## **Herd immunity too low**

“Thanks to efficient vaccines, we rarely see the disease today. But the virus is still lurking out there and could – and does – occasionally pop up unexpectedly,” Professor Marian Horzinek (Utrecht, NL), ABCD chairman, added. “In order to keep the disease at bay, the vaccinated percentage of any cat population should be as high as possible – certainly higher than the estimated 30% it is today.”

Apart from supportive treatment (fluids, antibiotics and possibly antisera or antivirals) there is no ‘cure’ for the disease, and cats may die in spite of intensive veterinary care. However, vaccines currently on the market are highly effective and efficiently protect cats against the disease, providing they are given according to the recommended protocol.

For further details and downloads of the full-text ABCD Feline Panleukopenia Guidelines, please visit [www.abcd-vets.org](http://www.abcd-vets.org). These guidelines also give recommendations for specific situations, such as immunocompromised cats, breeding catteries and cats undergoing corticosteroid treatment.

The guidelines on feline panleukopenia were adopted at the third meeting of the ABCD, held in Haarlem (NL) on 8-9 June 2006. At the meeting, the panel also discussed feline herpesvirus disease, for which guidelines are currently in preparation.

(ENDS)

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### **Notes to editors**

- The European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases is an independent panel of 17 leading veterinarians from ten European countries, with an expertise in immunology, vaccinology and/or feline medicine. The ABCD was set up to compile guidelines for the prevention and management of major feline infectious diseases in Europe, based on current scientific knowledge.
- Please visit [www.abcd-vets.org](http://www.abcd-vets.org) for detailed background information.
- Interviews, pictures and the ABCD logo are available upon request.
- Animal healthcare company Merial helped set up the European ABCD and supports this initiative through funding. Merial is a world-leading, innovation-driven company, providing a comprehensive range of products to enhance the health, well-being and performance of a wide range of animals. For more information, please see [www.merial.com](http://www.merial.com).

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