



Synbiotics Position Statement:

Should kittens under the age of 6 months be tested for FIV?

In July 2001, the *American Association Of Feline Practitioners* and the *Academy of Feline Medicine* (AAFP/AFM) published their recommendations for FeLV / FIV testing ("Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management")*. A major change was that FIV testing was now recommended for **all** cats, regardless of age. Earlier AAFP/AFM recommendations stated, "The FIV antibody status of all cats **over 6 months of age** should be known. If kittens less than 6 months of age are tested – NO MATTER WHETHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE TEST RESULT – they must be retested after 6 months of age." Why the change? Let's look at the following statements from the current (2001) recommendations:

- *Maternally derived antibodies to FIV in kittens younger than 6 months of age confound interpretation of positive test results.*
- *Kittens born to infected queens may test positive for antibody, yet most will not be infected.*
- *Most cats develop antibodies to FIV within 60 days after infection. However, the time required for seroconversion is extremely variable and may be considerably longer than 60 days in some instances.*

In other words, a positive result in kittens younger than 6 months may be due to maternal antibodies, and the kitten would not be infected. A negative result in a kitten may be due to the time required for seroconversion, which may be, "...considerably longer than 60 days."

Therefore, although the conclusions by the AAFP/AFM have changed, the facts have not.

Testing kittens younger than 6 months of age for FIV is problematic. Whether a positive or a negative result is obtained, they must be retested at a later date. Therefore, Synbiotics recommends FeLV only (not FIV) testing for kittens younger than 6 months.

*The complete 2001 Report of the AAFP/AFM Advisory Panel on Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management, made possible by an educational grant from IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., can be found in the July 2001 issue of the Compendium on Continuing Education for the Practicing Veterinarian.