



# FIV/FeLV testing

Flowcharts

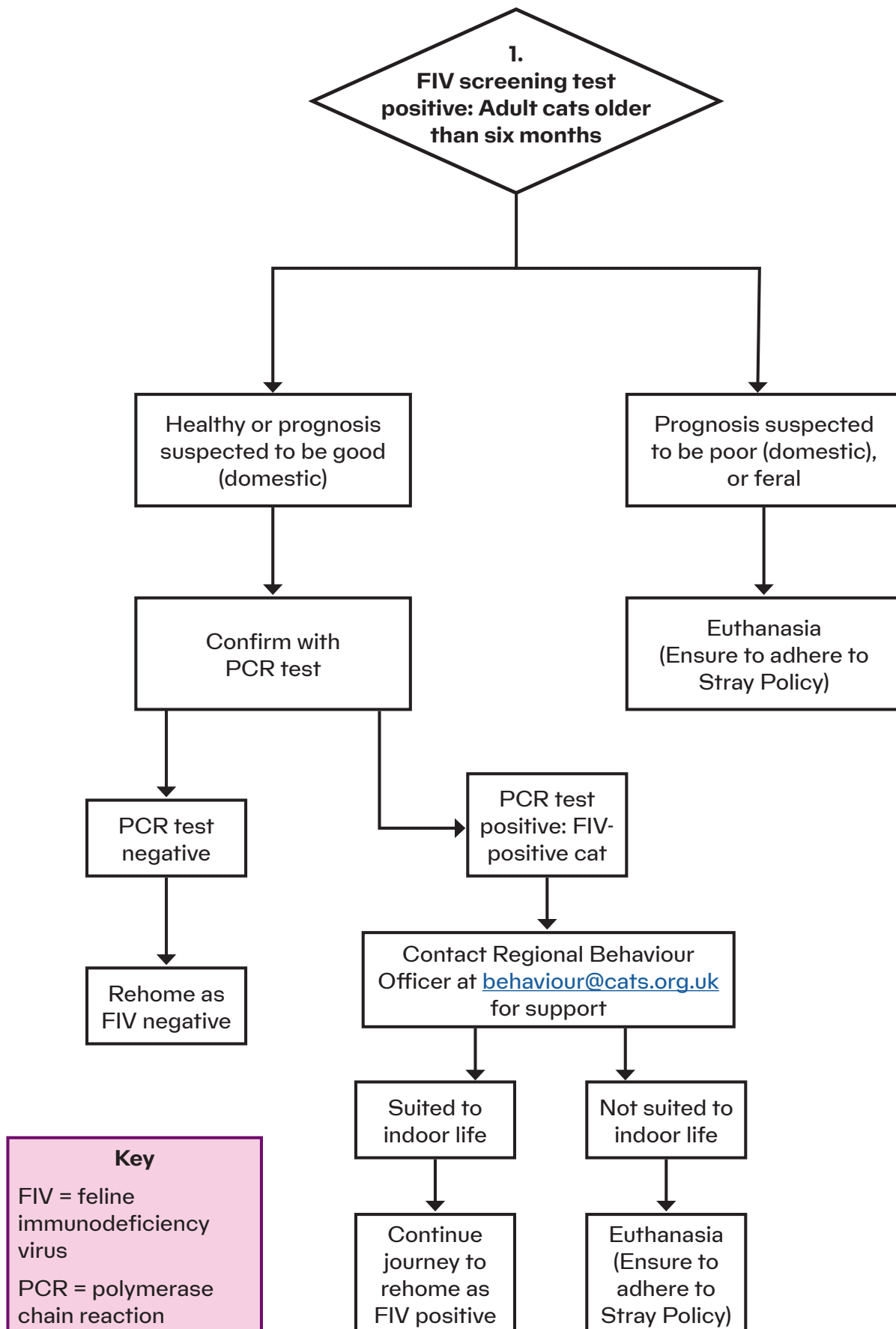


The following feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) test result flowcharts should be used as guidance for the management of cats in Cats Protection care and interpretation of test results.

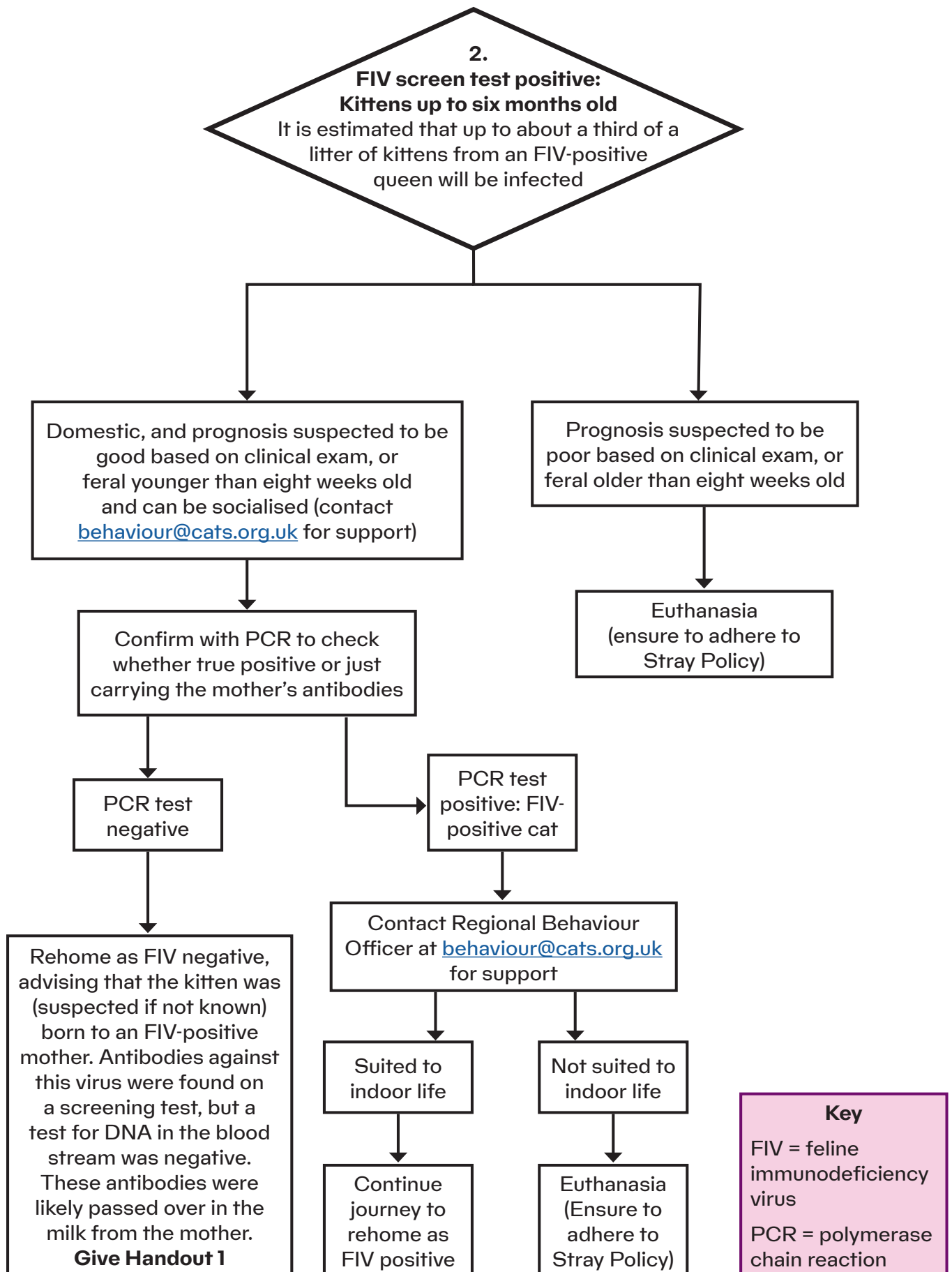
There may be situations not covered or requiring a different procedure, in which case, the Cats Protection representative or vet should contact the Veterinary team via [veterinary@cats.org.uk](mailto:veterinary@cats.org.uk)

Unless euthanasia should be performed due to the suspicion of a poor prognosis, or they are a feral cat over eight weeks old, all positive screening test results for FIV/FeLV should be confirmed. Please refer to the end of the document for further guidance on the Cats Protection approach to the confirmation of testing.

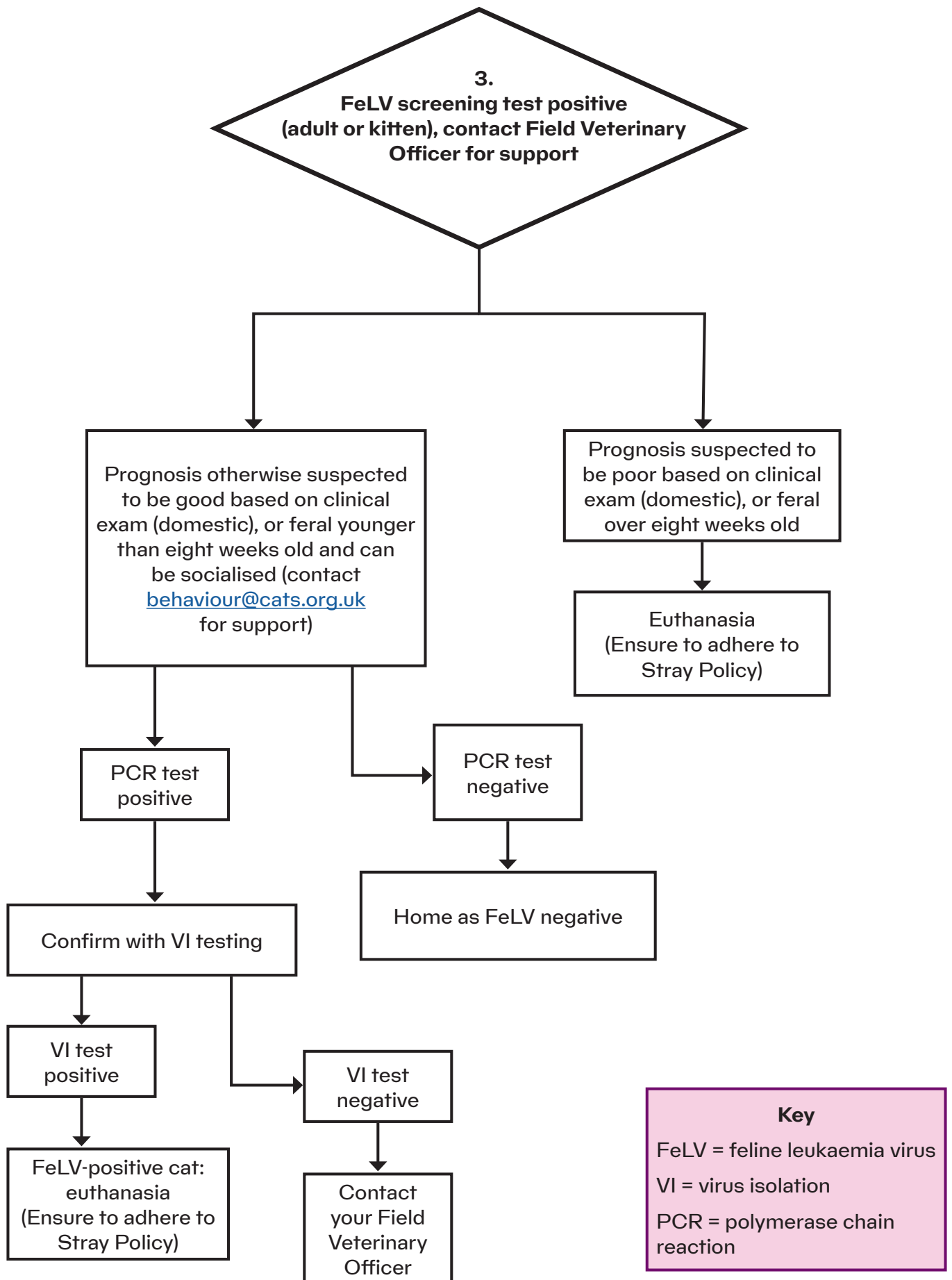
# This flowchart is for guidance only



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# FIV/FELV confirmatory blood tests

## When to confirm screen test FIV/FeLV results

Unless euthanasia should be performed due to the suspicion of a poor prognosis, or they are a feral cat over eight weeks old, all positive screening test results for FIV/FeLV should be confirmed at a reliable external laboratory. We currently recommend using Veterinary Diagnostic Services, Glasgow for FeLV in all cats (PCR and VI tests) and Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories, Bristol for FIV in all cats (PCR test).

If a screening test is negative but the vet is suspicious of the result, contact your Field Veterinary Officer for further advice.

## Recommended FIV/FeLV confirmatory blood tests at external laboratories

- **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test:** The PCR test looks for genetic material and is especially useful in kittens born of FIV-positive queens and to rule out FeLV infection
- **Virus isolation (VI) test:** A VI test grows the FeLV virus, to identify whether it is present

## Details of confirmatory laboratories

Submission forms and further details can be found on the following websites:

### Veterinary Diagnostic Services

University of Glasgow

[gla.ac.uk/schools/vet/cad](http://gla.ac.uk/schools/vet/cad)

### Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories

University of Bristol

A discounted test for Cats Protection cats can be submitted on the form found [here](#).

## FIV testing

### Adult cats

Screening test kits detect FIV antibodies which develop six to eight weeks after infection. For adult cats who test positive for FIV on a screening test, the guidance is to then send the blood (EDTA sample) to Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories, Bristol, for confirmation by PCR test.

If a cat is known to have had recent contact with a confirmed FIV-positive cat, contact your Field Veterinary Officer for further advice.

IFA (immunofluorescence assay) is not recommended for Cats Protection cats. If it has been undertaken in Cats Protection cats and has yielded inconclusive results, then a PCR test at Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories, Bristol, is recommended.

## Kittens

Kittens born to an FIV-positive mother can have maternal FIV antibodies until they are five to six months old, meaning if they were tested younger than six months of age using a screening test, it is likely that they would show positive results. Because the PCR test looks for actual genetic material, it is very useful in the diagnosis of infection in young kittens who may have maternally derived antibodies, but who do not actually have FIV. For kittens that test positive on a screening test, a blood sample (EDTA) should be sent to the Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories, Bristol, for confirmation with a PCR test.

## FeLV testing

Unlike tests for FIV, FeLV tests are not affected by maternally derived antibodies, so they can be used for cats of any age.

Screening test kits detect free FeLV antigen found in the cat's plasma. If a healthy cat or kitten tests positive for FeLV on a screening test, the guidance is to then send the blood to the Veterinary Diagnostic Services, Glasgow, for confirmation by PCR test and potentially VI test. Please send blood in both EDTA and heparin tubes.

PCR tests detect FeLV genetic material and are very sensitive, so a negative result means it is highly unlikely that the cat has FeLV. The turnaround time is within four days, so it is an excellent way to rule out FeLV infection after a false positive SpeedDuo test.

Positive PCR test results must be interpreted with care because the PCR test detects FeLV genetic material, and this may still be present in cats who have been transiently (briefly) infected with FeLV and then go on to recover. A VI test is therefore used as an additional confirmation test when a PCR test is positive.

If a cat tests negative for FeLV but has had known contact with an FeLV-positive cat within the last six weeks, please contact [veterinary@cats.org.uk](mailto:veterinary@cats.org.uk) for further advice.

More information on FIV/FeLV, including blood testing recommendations can be found on The Cat Group's website: [thecatgroup.org.uk](http://thecatgroup.org.uk)



[cats.org.uk](https://cats.org.uk)

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