

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

WHAT IS FIV?

FIV is a cat specific retrovirus. It is in the same family of viruses as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). FIV causes compromise to the cat's immune system which results in infected cats not being able to fight off various infections and certain cancers. FIV does not infect people, only cats.

HOW COMMON IS FIV?

In the Western U.S., FIV prevalence is 1.9% overall and higher in cats with access to outdoors at 4.3%. For the other regions of the U.S. and Canada, FIV prevalence varies from 2.1% to 3.1%.

HOW IS FIV SPREAD?

FIV is shed in high concentrations in a cat's saliva. The most common mode of transmission is through bite wounds from an infected cat. Transmission among cats co-existing peacefully in a household is uncommon, but may be possible.

WHAT DOES FIV DO TO A CAT?

There are 3 stages of disease for FIV infected cats:

The first stage, or the acute stage, generally occurs within weeks after the initial infection. This stage is associated with transient fever and temporary swelling of lymph nodes. This stage may or may not be noticeable.

The second stage, the latent or sub-clinical stage, can last for years. There may be no signs of FIV or cats may have recurrent episodes of infection or inflammation that can be treated and resolve.

During the third stage, the final or chronic stage, the cat's immune system is extremely compromised and deficient, which makes it nearly impossible for the cat to fight off infection. Cats in this stage will exhibit chronic and severe weight loss due to overwhelming infection/inflammation.

In summary:

A cat may remain asymptomatic for years after initial FIV infection. An FIV+ cat can live a normal or moderately decreased lifespan. Eventually, FIV compromises the cat's immune system which causes the FIV+ cat to be very susceptible to other infections. This can lead to chronic health problems and allow opportunistic infections to run rampant through the cat's body. Some diseases seen in FIV+ cats include chronic gum and mouth inflammation, unrelenting upper respiratory infection, recurrent skin infections, anemia, and some cancers.



HOW IS FIV TREATED AND MANAGED?

FIV+ cats should be indoor-only cats (no exceptions) to help prevent contracting various types of infections and to help prevent the spread of FIV to other cats.

It is very important that you inform your veterinarian that your cat is FIV+ to ensure that your vet will treat your cat with the best of care, such as proper vaccinations and aggressive treatment when infections occur.

Try to keep your cat's stress level low. A common stressor for cats is any type of change, small or large. Try to keep as stable and unchanging an environment for your FIV+ cat as possible. Also avoid allowing your FIV+ cat to have contact with other ill animals.

Feed your cat a nutritional diet, avoiding uncooked foods like raw meat, eggs and unpasteurized dairy products.

Visit the vet regularly—at least every six months. Your veterinarian should do a complete blood count, serum biochemical analysis, and a urine analysis annually. The FIV+ cat should receive routine vaccinations and medications to control gastrointestinal parasites.

FACTS ABOUT FIV

- 🐾 FIV is a cat specific virus.
- 🐾 Humans cannot become infected with FIV.
- 🐾 FIV cats can lead long, healthy lives with few or no symptoms.
- 🐾 FIV isn't easily passed between cats though normal day-to-day activities.
- 🐾 A spayed or neutered cat is extremely unlikely to spread the disease to other healthy cats if introduced properly.
- 🐾 Aggressive, free-roaming intact male cats are more likely to become infected with FIV than any other type of domesticated cat.
- 🐾 Male cats are more than two times more likely to be infected with FIV than female cats.
- 🐾 FIV+ cats should be kept as healthy as you can possibly keep them.
- 🐾 FIV+ cats must remain indoors, free from stress, fed a high-quality diet, and have routine veterinary exams at least every 6 months.

Don't forget to love and cherish your cat every day!



Contact your veterinarian for more information regarding FIV