



FELINE INFECTIOUS PERITONITIS (FIP)

What is FIP?

FIP is a viral infection of cats (domestic and wild). It can affect all ages, but is more common in cats 6 months to 2 years old. It is fairly common in cats 14-15 years old as well. It is characterized by a gradual, insidious onset and takes two forms: a wet form and a dry form. Mortality is almost 100%

How Did My Cat Catch FIP?

The virus is shed by an infected cat in its saliva and feces. It is probably contracted by respiratory inhalation or oral ingestion of infectious material.

Oddly, about 40-50% of cats infected with FIP also are infected with feline leukemia virus (FeLV). The virus does not live long outside the cat's body. It is most common in multi-cat households and in cats in poor physical condition or stressed with other infections.

What are the Symptoms of FIP?

The initial infection may be without symptoms, but a cat may show a fever, eye or respiratory inflammation, or diarrhea. It may be many weeks before the typical signs of FIP develop.

The symptoms can be highly varied depending on the form. Wet FIP is the more common form. It is characterized by fluid buildup in the chest or abdomen. The abdomen may be swollen and soft or the cat can show signs of breathing difficulty. In the dry form nodules of inflammatory tissue develop without fluid buildup. These nodules or granulomas may be in any organ, including the brain and eye. The signs of the dry form can vary greatly depending on the site of the lesions including weight loss, fever, weakness, listlessness, and convulsions.

In the end the cat will become very weak and die of multiple organ failure.

How is FIP Diagnosed?

The history, age, and symptoms are suggestive of the disease. If there is fluid buildup in the body cavities there is great suspicion of this disease. Tests done on the fluid and

blood tests will confirm the diagnosis in many cases. Occasionally a biopsy of the inflammatory granuloma is required. A positive blood test for FIP antibodies should be repeated in a healthy cat showing no signs of FIP.

How is It Treated?

Treatment is generally ineffective. There is an immunological aspect to the disease so both immune stimulators and suppressives have been used experimentally. The combination of antiinflammatories and immunosuppressives may add several months to the life of the cat. Mainly the treatments are supportive (antibiotics, intravenous fluids, corticosteroids, vitamins, and oxygen). Forced feeding may be needed too.

Is My Cat Going to Live?

With a death rate approaching 100%, you can expect that your cat will eventually die from the effects of FIP.

Can My Dog Catch It?

No, FIP is just a disease of the cat family.

Prevention is Better than Treatment

A vaccination is available, but some veterinarians do not recommend vaccinations since an immune cat that becomes exposed to the disease may develop a rapid onset of the acute disease. Therefore, at present, the best prevention is that healthy cats should be kept away from cats with the disease. Keep your cats indoors to prevent exposure to strays.

Special instructions: _____

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!