



FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS (URI)

What is Meant by Upper Respiratory Infections?

This is a group of infections of cats caused by some common viruses. These viruses are primarily feline viral rhinotracheitis (FVR, a herpesvirus) and feline calicivirus (FCV) infections. To a lesser degree we also see feline pneumonitis (Chlamydia) and mycoplasmal infections. FVR & caliciviruses pose no risk for humans or dogs. The feline chlamydial agent rarely can cause eye infections in humans.

How Could My Cat Catch URI?

Transmission of this virus is through aerosol droplets from sneezing cats or on objects nearby. Recovered cats can carry the virus for months afterward (calicivirus being shed continuously and FVR virus shed intermittently). Stress can precipitate another course of the illness in the carrier cat. The virus is also in the stool of an infected cat. The FVR virus can live in the environment for up to 18 hours.

What are the Symptoms of URI Infections?

The symptoms of these various diseases can be similar. All can cause a fever, sneezing, nasal discharge, eye inflammation and discharge, loss of appetite, depression, drooling, coughing and ulcers in the eyes and mouth. FVR is more likely to produce eye (corneal) ulcers than the others, and calicivirus is more likely to produce ulcers on the tongue, roof of the mouth, and on the nose. Chlamydial infections are usually chronic eye inflammations. Some cats can have multiple infections simultaneously.

How is URI Diagnosed?

The history and symptoms give us a presumptive diagnosis of the disease. Positive diagnosis would require isolation and identification of the agent.

How is It Treated?

Treatment for these diseases is largely symptomatic and supportive. Antibiotics are usually used to fight secondary bacterial invaders but are also effective against Chlamydial infections. If eye ulcers are

present, an antiherpes ointment may be prescribed. Some cats may need hospital care (injections, IV fluids, and oxygen). Remember, some recovered cats will remain carriers for months (or even years) and may have a relapse if stressed.

Is My Cat Going to Live?

Most cats will recover from upper respiratory infections with little or no aftereffects. Some will have a hard time getting over some of the side effects of the disease, like chronic sinusitis. Occasionally a cat will die of respiratory infections, but usually this indicates a suppressed immune system (concurrent FeLV, FIP, or FIV virus infections).

Prevention is Better than Treatment

There are vaccinations available. The vaccine is effective and safe and is part of the annual 4-way vaccination for cats. After an initial series an annual booster is recommended. Even a vaccinated cat may show some symptoms of URI if given a profound exposure to one of the viruses, but it will usually respond quickly to treatment.

Call Us If...

- Your cat does not seem to respond to the treatment
- Your cat takes a downturn in general health.
- Your cat loses its appetite or loses weight.
- You have finished the treatment but your cat is still not normal.

Special Instructions: _____

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!