



FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

What is FIV?

The Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is a retrovirus (as is the human HIV or AIDS virus). The feline virus only infects cats though. It is not dangerous to humans or dogs. Its main effect is to suppress the cats immune system.

How Did My Cat Catch FIV?

It is found in the saliva of infected cats. Therefore, it is felt the main avenue of infection is through bite wounds. Sharing water and food dishes may play a minor role as well. Some of the infected cats will also be infected with felineleukemia virus (FeLV). It most commonly affects older, male cats that are allowed outdoors. It is least likely to occur in young, indoor cats.

What are the Symptoms of FIV?

The signs of FIV can vary greatly, but some of the more common ones are: infections of the mouth and gums, poor wound healing, upper respiratory infections, diarrhea and wasting, tumor growth, leukemia, behavioral changes, bladder infections, skin diseases, and fevers of unknown origin. Symptoms will vary from cat to cat and time to time in the same cat. FIV infected cats may appear healthy, but are in fact immunosuppressed, and any exposure to infection may initiate disease.

How is FIV Diagnosed?

The history, age, and symptoms may be suggestive of the disease. A blood test can confirm the disease.

How is It Treated?

Treatment is ineffective at eliminating the disease. Mainly the treatments are supportive (antibiotics, intravenous fluids, vitamins, and blood transfusions). Forced feeding may be needed too. Treatments are initiated on an "as needed" basis to prevent and treat secondary bacterial infections.

Is My Cat Going to Live?

You can expect that your cat will eventually die from the effects of FIV, but supportive care when needed can keep it relatively healthy for years. Secondary infections are the greatest risk to these cats; some also develop various forms of cancer including leukemia. Most FIV infected cats can live quite a while with intermittent antibiotic therapy. It is contagious to other cats though, so your cat should be kept indoors and no other cats should be brought into the household.

Prevention is Better than Treatment

There is no vaccination available. 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 and the resulting fighting and bite wounds.

Call Us If...

- Your cat shows any sign of infection (skin, eyes, respiratory tract, or urinary bladder).
- Your cat takes a downturn in general health.
- Your cat loses it appetite.

Special instructions: _____

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!