

Feline Leukemia

What is Feline Leukemia?

Feline leukemia is a virus that attacks and weakens a cat's immune system. FeLV infection may follow one of two pathways. In the first pathway, FeLV attacks tissues and organs of the immune system. This attack leaves the cat susceptible to a wide variety of infectious diseases. The second pathway is when the FeLV infection develops cancer in the form of tumors or leukemia. FeLV is the #1 infectious disease killer of cats and kills nearly 1 million cats yearly!

How do cats get infected with Feline Leukemia?

FeLV infection is passed from cat to cat. It is shed in saliva, urine and feces. The virus is also transmitted through licking and biting. Infected pregnant cats can pass the virus to unborn kittens in the womb and to newborns, which are highly susceptible to the disease, through nursing and grooming. Food dishes and litter boxes can be a source of infection for healthy cats if they share them with infected cats.

How do I know if my cat has this disease?

A simple blood test done by your veterinarian will give you a quick and accurate result. Common symptoms include loss of appetite and consistent weight loss; however, some cats may not show symptoms until the disease has progressed.

How can I protect my cat from this disease?

Minimizing contact with other cats is the best way to protect your cat. A cat is at risk of getting FeLV if they go outdoors, is in contact with other cats, or is boarded when the owner is away. If your cat is at risk of contracting FeLV then vaccinating is highly recommended.

What happens to my cat if they get Feline Leukemia Virus?

If your cat is infected with FeLV it poses significant risk of exposure to other cats in the household plus any cats it may encounter. Because FeLV attacks and weakens the immune system, it leaves your cat open to a host of diseases such as respiratory infections, anemia, poor wound healing, cancer in the form of tumors or leukemia, and FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis). All these diseases will potentially shorten a cat's lifespan.



Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

What is Feline Immunodeficiency Virus?

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is a virus that causes immune deficiency in cats. FIV attacks and causes dysfunction of the immune system. The prevalence of FIV is estimated to be 3% in healthy cats and 9-15% in cats exhibiting signs of clinical illness.

How do cats get Feline Immunodeficiency Virus?

Most cats become infected with FIV when they are bitten by an infected cat. Less common routes of transmission are from an infected mother to her kittens and sexual transmission. Casual FIV transmission is caused sharing bowls, litter boxes, and mutual grooming although rare, must be considered.

How do I know if my cat has this disease?

A simple blood test done by your veterinarian will give you quick accurate results. This test detects FIV and/or Feline Leukemia Virus, which is a similar virus.

How can I protect my cat from this disease?

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine to protect cats against FIV infection. The best way to keep your cat safe is to make sure they are never exposed to an FIV-positive cat. Keep your cat indoors and test any new cats before coming into your room.

What happens to my cat if they get Feline Immunodeficiency Virus?

FIV infection progresses slowly, often with a long interval between exposure and onset of disease. All body systems can be affected because of immunosuppression. Examples are an upper respiratory infection, neurological disease, skin and ear infection, and cancer of organs.

