

FIV

"Feline immunodeficiency virus."

WHAT IS FIV?

FIV stands for "feline immunodeficiency virus," FIV is a virus that causes AIDS in cats; however, there is a long asymptomatic period before AIDS occurs.

The average life expectancy from the time of diagnosis for FIV is 5 years.

How Is FIV Diagnosed?

Infection from FIV is discovered using a screening test performed in your veterinarian's office or from a blood panel run at your veterinarian's reference laboratory.

Once a cat has been identified as positive by a screening test, a follow-up confirmation test called a "Western Blot" is the next step. Once this test is positive, the cat is considered to be truly infected.

How is it transmitted?

FIV is **ONLY** transmitted from Cat to Cat. It is **NOT** transmissible to dogs nor to humans in any way,

There is not a threat to families even if an FIV cat scratches or bites you.
FIV cats most often live long, healthy lives and never suffer any symptoms at all.

FIV is not easily passed between cats.

It is **NOT** transmitted by sharing litter boxes, water and food bowls or when snuggling, grooming or playing.

It is rarely transmitted from a mother to her kittens, but it is possible that kittens can test a false positive if tested at a young age due to the mother's antibodies passed on to them.

For this reason it is best to have kittens retested every 60 days up to 6 months of age.

The virus can be spread from cat to cat through blood transfusions or DEEP PENETRATING bite wounds. (Bite wounds of this kind are extremely rare, except in free-roaming, un-neutered tomcats.)

So unless your cats at home routinely tear each other to pieces, it should not be a problem.

A neutered FIV+ cat in a home is unlikely to infect other cats, if it is properly introduced.

Proper introduction should always be made when adding any new cat into your household.

It is not necessary to isolate an FIV+ cat in a multiple cat household unless the FIV+ cat is likely to fight with the other residents.

FIV virus was discovered 15 years ago.

So many vets from the old school will advise to euthanize FIV+ cats or to completely separate the cat from none FIV cats.

If we really think about it and went back 15 years, before anybody tested for FIV, all of these cats would be in regular homes living normal healthy lives!

However researchers discovered something they could put a name to, even if the cats never got sick.

Fiv vaccination.

In August 2002, Fort Dodge Animal Health released a vaccine for FIV and promoted it heavily.

There are five strains of FIV virus, called "Clades" (A, B, C, D & E). The vaccine was made using ONLY clades

A and D and tested using Clade A. Meaning that the vaccine only protects against Clades A and D.

Subtype A is mainly seen in the West Coast and Type D is only seen in Asia?

Clade B, for example, is a very common strain in most regions of the United States and no testing of the vaccine has been performed thus far against Clade B.

This means that a pet owner might wrongly believe they were protecting their cat fully against the FIV virus with this vaccine. California has both Clades A and B and type B is most prevalent on the east coast.

The above is a clear example of how veterinarians mislead pet owners just for the mere fact that they are running a business and need to make money.

DO NOT ASSUME BECAUSE YOUR VET HAS A DIPLOMA HE/SHE KNOWS BEST!

Unfortunately vets do tend to over medicate and over vaccinate.

ALWAYS QUESTION YOUR VET!

HPR does NOT recommend vaccinating against FIV

All cats vaccinated with the FIV vaccine will test positive for life!

If your cat was ever lost and is taken to a shelter, it may be euthanized as a result of this false positive test. There are no current commercial tests available to distinguish between a healthy vaccinated cat and one that truly has FIV.

In the event that your cat was vaccinated for FIV, HPR recommends microchipping the pet.

When registering the microchip please make sure they note that your cat was vaccinated for FIV.

The FIV vaccine is "adjuvanted." An adjuvant is an additive used with killed vaccines to improve their ability to stimulate the immune system. Adjuvants are suspect in VAS (vaccine-associated sarcomas) in other words is a vaccine that can stimulate tumor growth!

FIV infection is preventable by keeping cats indoors and preventing cat fights.

Care of FIV+ cats

Keep Your Cat Indoors Only to prevent the spread of this disease in your community.

Cats who are used to living outdoors will make a fuss about being allowed outside.

Don't give in and keep your cat inside regarding the crying.

If you just allow the crying to run its course, it will cease and the cat will get used to its new indoor-only life. Cats who are inclined to slip past people entering the home when the door is open can be managed by leaving them in a closed room when someone is out of the house.

This way, when the person arrives home, the cat does not have access to the front door.

Do not feed Raw Foods.

There are currently numerous diets involving raw foods for pets.

It is crucial NOT succumb to these popular recommendations when it comes to the FIV+ cat.

Uncooked foods, meats especially, can include parasites and pathogens that a cat with a normal immune system might be able to handle but an FIV+ cat might not.

Vaccination.

Vaccination should be continued for these cats just as they are for other cats.

We still recommend live virus vaccines even for FIV+ cats.

Parasite Control.

The last thing an FIV+ cat needs is fleas, worms, or mites.

There are numerous effective products on the market for parasite control.

DO NOT USE "HARTZ" flea treatments of any kind!

Consult with your veterinarian about which parasites you should be especially concerned with and which product is right for you.

Immune-Stimulating Agents

There are numerous products on the market claiming to stimulate the immune system of the FIV+ cat.

These include Acemannan, levamisole, Immunoregulin®, and Interferon Alpha.

General Monitoring.

While a non-geriatric FIV- cat should have an annual examination, the FIV+ cat should have a check-up twice a year.

Annually, a full blood panel and urinalysis is prudent.

Also, it is important to be vigilant of any changes in the FIV+ cat.

Small changes that one might not think would be significant in an FIV- cat, should probably be thoroughly explored in an FIV+ cat.

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