



TREMAIN VETERINARY GROUP

Treating your pet like one of the family

Advice Note 12.0

VIRAL DISEASES IN CATS - FeLV, FIP, FIV

Cats are susceptible to many viral diseases. Three important ones are Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) caused by a retrovirus, Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) caused by a corona virus and Feline Aids, caused by Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), which is also a retrovirus.

What are the symptoms of these viral diseases?

In all cases, cats can carry the virus without showing any obvious symptoms, and could be infected with one or more of the viruses at any one time. This is why we commonly test for two or three of the viruses at the same time.

How are these viruses diagnosed?

A diagnosis is usually only made once the cat has become ill. A single blood sample can be taken to test for all three viruses. In all positive cases, we would advise against bringing new cats into the household, as a new cat could be susceptible to getting infected

Feline Leukaemia Virus - FeLV

This disease used to be very common and was the second most important cause of death in cats after road traffic accidents. We are seeing fewer cases as many cats are now vaccinated against it, and we recommend all new kittens are immunised against FeLV.

The virus can cause many different conditions, because the immune system is depressed, including wasting, diarrhoea, sore gums, rhinitis and neoplasia (cancer). Young cats under 6 years are usually affected, though it may take months or years from infection before clinical signs are seen. There is no treatment and if an ill cat tests positive for FeLV, we would normally recommend euthanasia, depending on how ill the cat was. It is spread by direct contact, saliva, food bowls etc and is more common in multi-cat households, breeding catteries and male cats that roam.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis - FIP

This disease is also usually seen in young cats, three months to three years old and is invariably fatal when it develops. However, only about 1 in 10 cats exposed to and infected with the virus actually go on to develop the disease. Therefore, apparently healthy cats could be silent carriers of the disease. There is no treatment once signs develop, and no vaccine. There are two main forms of the disease, wet and dry. In the wet form fluid slowly builds up in the abdomen and the cat develops a pot bellied appearance, becoming thin and lethargic. Euthanasia is necessary. The dry form can be difficult to diagnose and many body

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Feline Infectious Peritonitis - FIP continued...

systems may be affected, including the brain, eyes, lungs, liver and kidneys. The cat will usually be depressed, thin, small for its age and often have episodes of fever.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus - FIV

This virus affects the cat's immune system, making it less able to fight infection. It is very similar to the virus causing human AIDS, and the symptoms are often very like those caused by FeLV. Affected cats may have bouts of illness, going off their food and having episodes of diarrhoea. Sore gums are a common problem and tooth extraction may be needed. The disease is a slowly progressive one, but many cats may lead happy healthy lives if they are treated promptly for infections. Cats may be infected by contact or bite wounds, so it is advisable not to allow infected cats to roam, and not to bring new healthy cats into the household. There is no vaccine.