

FIV: the feline AIDS virus

annual vaccination helps protect against FIV infection

what is FIV?

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) is a disease that destroys the immune system of the infected cat, leaving it unable to fight off infection in the normal way - very similar to human HIV.

Feline AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) describes the terminal stages of disease associated with FIV infection.

The virus lives in the blood of the infected cat and is carried in its system throughout its life. **The cat disease cannot be spread to people.**

how is it spread? and is my cat at risk?

FIV is transmitted by saliva. All unvaccinated cats are at risk.

Outdoor cats that are known fighters, particularly those with a history of cat bite abscesses, are at a higher risk of contracting the disease.

Normal social interactions, such as grooming, have a very low risk of transmitting FIV.

Kittens can become infected if their mother has the virus.

symptoms

Following infection, a cat may remain in the asymptomatic phase of infection and have no signs of illness for many years.

As the disease progresses, common non-specific signs include;

- * Weight loss
- * Inflammation of the mouth and gums
- * Poor appetite
- * Conjunctivitis
- * Swollen glands
- * Vomiting and diarrhoea

Eventually the immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections and diseases. As a result the cat may die from one of these infections.

treatment

There is no cure for FIV. The healthier a cat is, the longer the asymptomatic period tends to be.

You can help your FIV positive cat by ensuring it has a healthy life-style, good quality food and regular veterinary check-ups. Any infections should be treated quickly and aggressively.

prevention

If your cat spends time outdoors, and particularly if they are involved in cat fights, then we recommend vaccination.

However it should be kept in mind that the vaccination is not 100% protective, and the best protection is to prevent your cat from being bitten.

Other ways to reduce the risk include;

- * Limiting exposure of indoor cats to outdoor cats
- * Desex cats to reduce aggression
- * Blood test new cats prior to introduction into the household

why does my cat need a blood test before vaccination?

For unvaccinated cats that are older than 6 months old, a blood test is necessary to check that the cat has not been infected with FIV virus prior to the vaccination.

Once the cat has been vaccinated, it becomes more difficult to test if the cat has been naturally infected with the virus in the past.

