



## FieldHaven Feline Rescue

### *The "F" Words*

*What you should know about these  
feared diseases in cats*

#### **Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)**

Feline leukemia is a viral disease seen only in cats. It is not transmissible to humans (even children) or to any other species, such as dogs. FeLV is caused by a type of virus, called a retrovirus, which infects the cat's cells and reprograms them to continually produce copies of the virus. This produces a condition in the cat called persistent viremia, which makes the disease impossible to cure. Since the virus is in the blood, saliva, mucus, urine and feces of infected cats, any contact by an uninfected cat with these body fluids can result in transmission of the virus. Fighting, sharing food and water bowls, sharing litter boxes, and mutual grooming are the most common means of transmission. There are two types of blood tests available to test for FeLV. Although a variety of treatments have been tried, presently there is no effective cure for feline leukemia. The cat should be supported with good nutrition, a low-stress environment and regular veterinary care at the first sign of illness. There is a vaccine for feline leukemia, but you and your veterinarian should decide together whether or not to vaccinate your cats. Most cats survive less than two years following diagnosis. How long a particular infected cat will live is impossible to predict, however. Since the disease affects the immune system, close monitoring for signs of illness and prompt treatment of these illnesses can help prolong the cat's life.

***FieldHaven uses the ELISA test and tests all adult cats/kittens upon arrival at our facility.***

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/CatFeLV.pdf>

#### **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)**

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) is very similar to the virus that causes AIDS in humans. However, the virus seen in cats is in no way transmissible to humans or dogs. FIV is shed in the saliva of infected cats, so the disease is spread through bite wounds. The disease is seen more often in un-neutered stray or feral male cats, since fighting is more common among these cats. Transmission can also occur from an infected mother to her kittens, either while in the womb or through ingestion of milk during nursing. A simple blood test called ELISA is used to diagnose FIV. Although there is no specific treatment for FIV, infected cats can live long and healthy lives. It is important to keep these cats up-to-date on vaccinations, feed them a high-quality diet, and seek veterinary treatment at the first sign of illness. Since the disease is spread by bite wounds, you can safely keep an FIV-positive cat with FIV-negative cats if the cats get along well together. If you have a cat with FIV, remember to work closely with your veterinarian regarding vaccinations and health care. There is currently a vaccine available for FIV, but you and your veterinarian should decide together whether or not to vaccinate your cats. Remember, too, that FIV-positive cats can live long, happy lives with the proper care.

***FieldHaven use the Elisa test and tests all age appropriate cats for FIV upon arrival at our facility.***

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/catfiv.pdf>

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## **Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)**

Feline infectious peritonitis is a very devastating disease in cats caused by a corona virus. There are two forms of the disease: the wet form and the dry form. Cats of any age can be affected, but the disease occurs most often in young cats from six months to five years of age. Diagnosis by laboratory testing can be difficult since most cats naturally have the corona virus that causes the disease. What causes the development of the disease signs is the cat's immune response to the virus. For this reason, FIP is not considered to be a contagious disease in the traditional sense. There is a laboratory test, but a positive test merely means that the cat has a corona virus, not that the cat will develop the disease. Once the cat is showing clinical signs, there is no cure. Cats infected with FeLV and/or FIV are more prone to develop clinical FIP. Despite supportive care, all cats that develop clinical signs of the FIP virus will die or will need to be humanely euthanized. The incidence of clinical disease is low in most cat populations and especially low in single-cat households. The disease prevalence is highest in multi-cat facilities or households. There is a vaccine available for FIP, but its efficacy is low and therefore it cannot be relied upon to prevent the disease.

***With the absence of a reliable test for FIP, FieldHaven adheres to the protocols recommended by Shelter Medicine experts for isolating and maintaining the health of kittens to minimize risk of FIP exposure.***

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/CatFIP.pdf>