



Introduction to Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. It's a lentivirus, meaning that it progresses very slowly, gradually affecting a cat's immune system. It is passed through blood transfusions and through serious, penetrating bite wounds – mainly by stray, intact tom cats. You can't get FIV from a cat. In fact, the only thing about FIV that you can catch is a bad case of the rumors. Casual, non-aggressive contact does not spread FIV. As a result, cats in household with stable social structures where housemates do not fight are at little risk for acquiring FIV. We encourage people to introduce the cats properly and monitor initial interactions between them, just as they would with any new cat.

FIV Facts

- The Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is a slow virus that affects a cat's immune system over a period of years.
- FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be spread to humans or other non-felines.
- FIV cats most often live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms.
- FIV is not easily passed between cats. It cannot be spread casually – like in litter boxes, water, and food bowls, or when snuggling and playing.
- The virus can be spread by blood transfusions or serious, penetrating bite wounds.
- A neutered cat, in a home, is extremely unlikely to infect other cats, if properly introduced.

How should FIV-infected cats be managed?

- FIV cats should be kept as healthy as possible and free from stress.
- FIV cats should be confined indoors to reduce their exposures to infectious agents carried by other animals.
- FIV cats, as all cats, should be spayed or neutered.
- FIV cats should be fed a high-quality nutritionally complete and balanced diet.
- FIV cats should not be fed uncooked food, such as raw meat and eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products.
- FIV cats should have wellness visits with a veterinarian at least every six months.
- Vigilance and close monitoring of the health and behavior of FIV cats is even more important than it is for FIV-negative cats. Alert your veterinarian to any changes in your cat's health as soon as possible.