



Orange Street Cats

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. The most well-known lentivirus in humans is HIV. But the two are not at all the same, and 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 appear to be an efficient route of spreading FIV; as a result, cats in households with stable social structures where housemates do not fight are at little risk for acquiring FIV infections. We encourage people to introduce the cats properly and monitor initial interactions between them, just as they would with any new cat.

FIV Facts

1. The Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is a slow virus that affects a cat's immune system over a period of years.
2. FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be spread to humans or other non-felines.
3. FIV cats most often live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms at all.
4. 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.
5. The virus can be spread through blood transfusions or serious, penetrating bite wounds.
6. A neutered cat, in a home, is extremely unlikely to infect other cats, if properly introduced.

How should FIV-infected cats be managed?

1. FIV-positive cats should be kept as healthy as possible and free from stress.
2. FIV-infected cats should be confined indoors to reduce their exposure to infectious agents carried by other animals.
3. FIV-infected cats, as all cats, should be spayed or neutered.
4. They should be fed a high-quality nutritionally complete and balanced diet.
5. Uncooked food, such as raw meat and eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products should not be fed to FIV-infected cats.
6. Wellness visits for FIV-infected cats should be scheduled with your veterinarian at least every six months.
7. Vigilance and close monitoring of the health and behavior of FIV-infected cats is even more important than it is for uninfected cats. Alert your veterinarian to any changes in your cat's health as soon as possible.

Resources

Best Friends Animal Society, FIV Cat Resources, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eq9LqegxUvZ-GPR1LoUaXpMePcJAZ47QzO8zqp1Vi6M/edit>

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/brochures/fiv.html>