

Cat: FIV Information



What is Feline Immunodeficiency Virus?

FIV stands for **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus**. It is a virus that attacks the immune system of cats. Many cats tolerate the virus well, but eventually throughout the cat's life, the virus will degrade the immune system to the point where common pathogens (bacteria, viruses, parasites etc.) may cause serious disease. Once infected, a cat is infected for life. There is no cure or treatment for FIV. FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be transmitted to people or dogs.

How is FIV spread?

FIV is spread by an infected cat biting another cat. On rare occasions infection is transmitted from an infected mother cat to her kittens, during birth or through infected milk. Sexual contact is not a major means of spreading FIV.

How long can I expect my FIV+ cat to live?

It is impossible to predict the life span of any cat, regardless of their current health status. With proper care, FIV+ cats can have normal life expectancies.

Can an FIV+ cat live with other cats?

Yes. Casual contact between an FIV+ cat and a non-infected cat does not spread FIV. Therefore, cats in households with stable social structures, where housemates do not fight, can be housed together. FIV+ cats can also live with other FIV+ cats.

It is the sole responsibility of the adopter/guardian to make the decision to house an FIV+ cat with a non-infected cat. If done properly, they can lead happy lives together, but there is always a chance that if they fight the virus can be transmitted.

How is infection diagnosed?

FIV is detected by a simple blood test that can be done at your local veterinarian's office.

How should FIV+ cats be managed?

FIV+ cats should be kept indoors at all times to prevent catching an illness and also to prevent transmitting FIV to other cats through fighting. They should be fed a balanced diet, like all cats should, and raw diets should be avoided (due to increased risk of food borne disease being transmitted to your FIV+ cat). A wellness veterinary exam and laboratory work should be done annually to ensure your FIV+ cat's ultimate health. FIV+ cats, like all cats, should always be spayed or neutered.

Why should I adopt an FIV+ cat?

FIV + cats are just like other cats. They all have unique personalities and traits and will provide you with years of love, companionship, and laughter.