



Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

FIV FAQ

Background

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), is a virus that attacks the immune system of a cat.

Is FIV contagious?

FIV is spread from cat to cat via mating or deep puncture bite wounds. Thankfully all our cats are spayed or neutered so mating is no longer an option. It is specific to the feline species, and is not transmissible to dogs, humans, or any other animals. Since FIV is spread from cat to cat through deep puncture bite wounds, ***FIV+ cats can live with other cats that have tested negative as long as the cats get along without fighting.***

How is FIV diagnosed?

Screening and diagnosis of FIV is through a test that looks for viral antigens in the blood of a cat. The test is reliable, but false positive results can occur so retesting is recommended.

Do FIV+ cats need special medication or care?

As long as an FIV positive cat is healthy, it does not need any special medical care or medication. When they do get sick, they may get very sick quickly, take longer to recover, or may have recurrent illness due to the virus' effect on the cat's immune system. Some other common ailments for FIV+ cats are poor coat condition, persistent fever, and chronic or recurring infections of the skin, eyes, bladder, and upper respiratory infections (URI). They may also be more susceptible to cancer and blood diseases. Inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) and mouth (stomatitis) may require further care/treatment and possible extractions.

Cats with FIV can live normal, happy, healthy lives when living in a stable environment with regular vet care including yearly blood work.

Adopting an FIV+ cat

Cats can be very sensitive to stress and unfamiliar situations and routines. Be aware that cats are generally very skilled at hiding their pain and discomfort. Prolonged stress can, in turn, lead to illness. If you adopt an FIV+ cat, it's important to be aware of the symptoms of common stress-related illnesses that can appear post-adoption (not eating, fever, sneezing, yellow or green nasal discharge, congestion, lethargy, etc). For routine care such as skin issues, diarrhea, dental/extractions, etc., see your regular veterinarian. You may also choose to use PAWS as your veterinarian for checkups and other routine matters, but please be aware that we are not a full service veterinary hospital, nor can we provide emergency services.