



COMMUNITY SERVICES
Irvine Animal Care Center

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

WHAT IS FIV?

FIV, or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, is a common viral disease of cats that is similar to human HIV. Like a person with HIV, a cat can be infected with FIV and enjoy a good quality of life for quite some time before, if ever, developing full blown disease. FIV-positive cats do not pose a risk for HIV infection in humans. There is no cure for FIV, and cats with this virus are often more susceptible to a number of secondary infections due to a compromised immune system.

HOW DO CATS GET FIV?

The most common route of infection is a deep bite wound from an FIV-positive cat to another cat. It can be transmitted via blood, in utero, and from the milk of an infected mother cat. It is very rare for cats to get FIV just from being around infected cats, from sharing food bowls, or from a person touching an FIV-positive cat and then touching an FIV-negative cat. Many FIV-positive and FIV-negative cats live together in the same home for years without spreading the virus to the non-infected cats.

WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS OF FIV INFECTION?

Cats with FIV can live a number of years, or even a lifetime, without developing clinical signs. FIV-positive cats have a weaker immune system, so they are more prone to getting infections, such as abscesses, upper respiratory infections, and dental disease. Cats that are showing clinical signs at the time of diagnosis will likely succumb to the disease sooner than those that are healthy at the time of diagnosis.

CAN FIV BE TREATED?

There is no known cure or proven treatment for FIV. It is important to concentrate on treating the secondary illnesses, providing consistent good nutrition, and protecting from stress and infectious disease.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FIV?

The only sure way to protect cats is to prevent their exposure to the virus. Cat bites are the major means by which infection is transmitted. Keeping cats indoors, away from potentially infected cats, markedly reduces their likelihood of contracting FIV infection. Keeping your FIV-positive cat indoors protects other cats from exposure to the virus and your FIV-positive cat from developing other illnesses.

CAN FIV-POSITIVE CATS HAVE A GOOD AND LONG LIFE?

Yes, FIV-positive cats can live normal lives, both in quality and duration. They need to be monitored for infections, dental issues, and other diseases. But if they're well cared for, they can be healthy, happy, wonderful pets.

