



FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FeLV)

WHAT IS FeLV?

FelV, or Feline Leukemia Virus, is a contagious disease of only cats that can cause leukemia and other cancers, anemia, and a suppressed immune system. It is possible for a cat to fight off initial FeLV infection, but there is no cure for the disease. Kittens are at a significantly higher risk of FeLV infection than adults.

HOW DO CATS GET FeLV?

The most common route of infection is through the saliva of infected cats, but it can also be spread via urine, nasal/ocular secretions, feces, fleas, in utero, and an infected other cat. FeLV can be transmitted via direct contact, shared food/water bowls, shared toys, shared litter boxes, etc. The virus does not live long outside the cat's body (hours to 1-2 days) and is killed by most disinfectants.

WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS OF FeLV INFECTION?

Cats with FeLV can live several years without developing clinical signs. However, most will have a significantly shorter lifespan than uninfected cats. They have a weaker immune system, so are more prone to getting infections, such as abscesses, upper respiratory infections, and dental disease. They are also more prone to cancer, especially leukemia and lymphoma.

CAN FeLV BE TREATED?

There is no known cure or proven treatment for FeLV. 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 FeLV?

The only sure way to protect cats is to prevent their exposure to the virus. Keeping cats indoors, away from potentially infected cats, markedly reduces their likelihood of contracting FeLV infection. Keeping your FeLV-positive cat indoors protects other cats from exposure to the virus and your FeLV-positive cat from exposure to infectious diseases.

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

FeLV-positive cats can live good quality lives for a few years. However, most infected cats will not live as long as their uninfected counterparts. They need to be monitored for cancers, infections, dental issues, and other diseases, and should be examined by a veterinarian as soon as a problem is noticed. If well cared for, they can be happy, wonderful pets.

