

FELINE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Bacterial & Viral Infections

Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and is virtually 100% fatal for most mammals including dogs, cats, cows, horses, and humans. The virus is secreted in the saliva of infected animals and is most often transmitted through bite wounds. Infected animals may exhibit fearfulness, aggression, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, staggering, and/or seizures. After noticeable disease signs appear, the death almost always occurs within two to three days.

Feline Herpesvirus, also called feline viral rhinotracheitis, and **Feline Calicivirus** are the two leading causes of feline upper respiratory infection, and estimates indicate that these two viruses cause up to 90% of all such infections. Transmission occurs through contact with infected saliva, eye or nasal discharge, or via contact with infected objects. Disease signs include sneezing, runny eyes and nose, and high fever. In addition, feline herpesvirus can cause severe chronic corneal ulcerations and calicivirus can cause painful mouth or tongue ulcers. Disease can be severe—even fatal—in kittens.

Feline Panleukopenia, sometimes referred to as feline distemper or feline parvovirus, is highly contagious, resists disinfectants, and can remain infectious in the environment for years. Signs of infection include lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, severe dehydration, a severe drop in white blood cell count (panleukopenia), and sometimes acute unexpected death. This disease kills thousands of kittens and cats every year.

Chlamydia is also called pneumonitis. This bacteria is yet another cause of ocular and upper respiratory illness in cats. Infection causes upper respiratory infection in cats and is easily transmitted among cats via direct contact, and its symptoms are similar to those of herpesvirus and calicivirus. Conjunctivitis is the most common sign seen by pet owners, but you may also notice sneezing and nasal discharge. Although it usually causes milder disease on its own, when combine with other infectious agents as it often is, the symptoms can magnify greatly.

Feline Leukemia Virus is a serious viral infection with multiple systemic effects. It is the most common cause of blood and bone marrow disorders in cats, it is the cause of one-third of all feline cancer deaths, and it can also cause immune suppression which allows the cat to become more easily infected with other diseases. This disease is primarily spread by bite wounds but can also be spread by social contact. Common signs include loss of appetite, weight loss, swollen lymph nodes, fever, diarrhea, and discharge from the nose and eyes. Feline immunodeficiency virus is in the same family as the feline leukemia virus and consequently it has similar effects and is spread much the same way. **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus**, often called the Feline AIDS Virus, is a closely related and similar infectious agent with similar symptoms.

Parasitic Infections

Heartworms are parasites transmitted by mosquitoes and live primarily in the heart and lungs. Their presence in cats can cause vomiting, severe asthma-like illness, neurologic disease including seizures, and sudden and unexpected death. Unlike dogs, cats with this disease cannot be treated, so prevention is even more important in cats than it is in dogs. While there is no vaccine, there are many highly effective preventive medications that cats can take to keep from developing this disease.

Hookworms are gastrointestinal parasites transmitted when picked up from contaminated environments. Kittens can also get them from their mothers while nursing. These are blood sucking parasites and severe infestations can cause weakness, weight loss, diarrhea, and severe anemia. This parasite is potentially contagious to humans.

Roundworms are gastrointestinal parasites that are often transmitted to the kittens while nursing. They can also be picked up from contaminated environments. Symptoms can include diarrhea, respiratory distress, potbelly, weakness, and unhealthiness. This is a particularly important parasite because it can spread to humans and can cause serious illness especially in children.

Reference: <http://www.continuumforpets.com/cat-common.asp>