



FELINE ASTHMA

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Feline allergic bronchitis or **feline asthma** is a respiratory disease that can affect feline patients of any age causing episodes of labored breathing (dyspnea), coughing, wheezing, and open mouth breathing.

Much like human asthma, feline patients can have difficulty breathing caused by constriction or obstruction of the tiny airways (bronchioles) in the lungs. Over time, these airways can suffer permanent damage and remain constricted. This is often a serious, life-threatening disease for feline patients.

Feline asthma can be aggravated by inhaled triggers like allergens, cigarette smoke, litter dust, dander, or even carpet/household cleaners. In some circumstances, stressful events can trigger these episodes.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Clinical history and a thorough physical examination will often yield a presumptive diagnosis.

X-rays (radiographs) will help confirm **feline asthma** and differentiate from other diseases such as congestive heart failure and pneumonia. Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) and [Pneumonia](#) documents for additional information.

Feline heartworm disease has been implicated in causing **feline asthma**, so testing for heartworm is recommended. Please see the [Heartworm Disease](#) document for additional information.

TREATMENT

Medical management is focused on reducing the frequency and severity of asthma attacks in addition to reducing airway inflammation.

Glucocorticoids (steroids) are the cornerstone of therapy for **feline asthma** to help reduce inflammation and reaction to inhaled stimulants. These steroids are often oral medications, but some steroid inhalers have been found to give some long-term management options. However, these steroid inhalers are reducing in their availability.

Rescue inhalers (albuterol) are often used during immediate attacks but are not effective for long-term control.

Oral bronchodilators can sometimes be beneficial but are often met with variable improvement.

Any feline patient with severe respiratory distress (dyspnea) needs to be taken to a veterinarian immediately.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Reduce exposure to triggers (smoke, litter dust, and certain cleaners) and change furnace filters regularly.
- **Feline asthma** is a life-long disease, and often requires a life-long management strategy.