



## FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

**Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)** (similar to HIV) is a fatal viral infection typically spread between feline patients through bite wounds. This virus is rarely transmitted to nursing kittens and through sexual transmission. The virus may exist on water bowls or litter boxes but is easily destroyed by diluted bleach.

**FIV** affects patients through two means:

- By weakening the immune system and increasing susceptibility to other infections (bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.).
- By directly destroying some healthy cells so that they can no longer function properly.

After initial infection, many patients have vague symptoms and a low-grade fever. Typically, the virus will go dormant, and patients can remain symptom-free for many years.

Symptoms are broad, as infection and damage can happen in any body system. Some may include:

- Skin and ear infections
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or unwillingness to eat (anorexia)
- Low red blood cell count (anemia)
- Oral infections, gingivitis, or tooth loss
- Respiratory infections and pneumonia
- Confusion and dementia

Feline patients with **FIV** must be kept indoors and isolated to prevent transmission to other cats and to prevent exposure to other diseases. Other feline patients should not be brought into the household.

A **FIV** vaccine exists but is not routinely administered as a core vaccine. It is typically reserved for high-risk situations.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A simple in-clinic blood test exists and is both sensitive and specific.

Reference laboratory testing also exists but is rarely necessary.

Feline patients who have been vaccinated for **FIV** will test positive on the screening tests. Also, kittens who are nursing from vaccinated mothers will also test positive up to 12 weeks after weaning.

### TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for **FIV**.

The most effective therapeutic goal is early detection of concurrent infections with early intervention.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- All **FIV**-positive patients should be isolated and kept strictly indoors.
- When testing, assume that most feline patients have not been vaccinated against this virus.
- Treatment will only help secondary infections and symptoms.