



## FELINE INFECTIOUS PERITONITIS

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

**Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP)** is a highly contagious and extremely serious viral disease mainly spread through feces or bodily fluids of infected patients. Heavily contaminated litter boxes or mother-to-offspring are the most common causes. **FIP** is caused by a virus, which is a mutated form of the feline coronavirus (FCoV). This disease most frequently appears in patients less than two years old, and older patients greater than 10 years old.

The number of exposed cats that actually contract **FIP** is low (<10%) because a viral mutation of FCoV is required. In most cases, the virus remains confined to the intestinal tract and may cause mild symptoms.

Patients who develop **FIP** will ultimately die, but there are two main manifestations of symptoms:

- Noneffusive “dry” form – causes spontaneous inflammation in a variety of body systems
  - Can cause vomiting, diarrhea, kidney or liver failure, neurologic signs, seizures, and eventually death.
  - This manifestation is much more common in older patients.
- Effusive “wet” form – causes fluid to accumulate in body cavities (chest and abdomen).
  - Will often cause respiratory distress or abdominal distension.

Meticulous cleaning of all litter boxes along with food and water bowls can help reduce environmental contamination. Daily use of household cleaners or diluted bleach solutions are most effective.

A vaccine exists but is generally not recommended and is unnecessary. The only patients that would benefit from this vaccine are those that have been proven to be FCoV negative prior to vaccination. Vaccination of feline patients in households where **FIP** has been diagnosed is also not recommended as they have already been exposed to FCoV.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A routine laboratory test for **FIP** does not exist. The only definitive diagnosis for **FIP** is achieved post-mortem (after death) with multiple body tissue biopsies.

A test exists for FCoV, but it does not mean that a patient will progress to **FIP**. This test is sometimes utilized as a screening test to prevent household contamination of FCoV to currently negative feline patients.

While no specific testing exists, veterinarians often achieve their ante-mortem (before death) diagnosis of **FIP** by interpreting clinical history, physical examination, and routine laboratory testing. The “wet” form is easier to diagnose in this fashion.

### TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for **FIP**, and patients often worsen until death.

Treatment is aimed at minimizing effects of clinical signs.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Routine testing is not often performed, but household screening for FCoV can be elected to assess risk.
- If a patient is diagnosed with **FIP**, other feline patients in the household have been exposed but will not necessarily contract the infection.
- Exercise thorough and daily cleaning habits.