

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS **“CAT AIDS”**

What is it? -

- ❑ A viral disease, specific to cats – other species, including man, are NOT at risk.
- ❑ Immune depressant – infection leads to a suppression of the natural immune system, meaning the cat cannot fight infection, or heal properly.
- ❑ Spread by bites, in saliva. ie while fighting. It is not therefore a sexually transmitted disease, although fighting and biting is part and parcel of feline sexual activity!

Which cats are at risk? –

- ❑ Any cat with access to other cats, but predominantly, and in order of likelihood
 1. entire tomcats (entire = not desexed).
 2. cats exposed to entire tomcats, especially if they themselves are entire (get rid of stray toms!).
 3. habitual fighters.

What signs will you see?

- ❑ Initially nothing, although you may have noticed that the cat has been in a fight.
- ❑ Sometimes nothing for months – but the cat will be infectious to others.
- ❑ Chronic (meaning long term) infections – most commonly either “cat flu” that will not clear up, or an abscess that refuses to go away even after antibiotics.
- ❑ Immune depression is not constant – infections may wax and wane.
- ❑ Eventual debilitation, as the chronic infections run the body right down.

How do you diagnose FIV infection?

- ❑ By a blood test performed in clinic. The test is recommended in the face of the above symptoms. Results are available immediately.
- ❑ Differential diagnoses are: Feline leukaemia virus (not seen here yet), debilitation due to kidney failure or cancer.

What treatment is available?

- ❑ Nothing specific.
- ❑ Attempt to treat the concurrent infections, and support to alleviate the debilitation.
- ❑ Considerate owners should endeavour to limit the spread of the disease by locking the cat up at night.
- ❑ Patients will require euthanasia when debilitation is extreme.

What steps can you undertake to minimise the chances of infection?

- ❑ Desex all cats.
 - ❑ Eradicate strays, especially toms.
 - ❑ Lock cats up at night, the worst time for fighting.
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