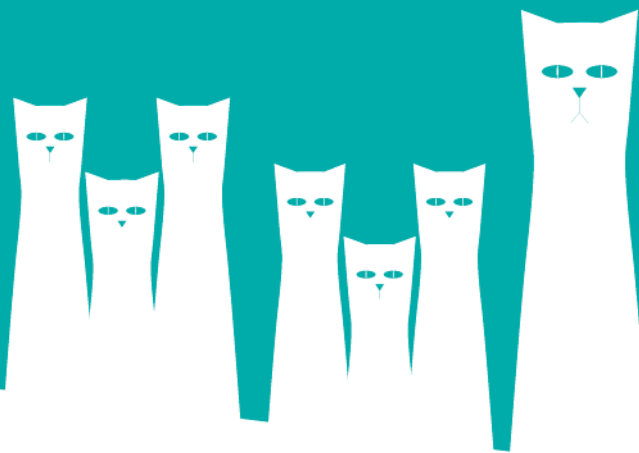


Feline Parvovirus (FPV)



CATS PROTECTION
VETERINARY GUIDES



Feline parvovirus is a virus that can cause severe disease in cats – particularly kittens. It can be fatal. As well as feline parvovirus (FPV), the disease is also known as feline infectious enteritis (FIE) and feline panleucopenia.

Feline parvovirus is extremely resilient and can survive in the environment for up to a year. Sadly, this disease has a very high mortality rate and, on occasion, outbreaks are still seen in some multi-cat situations such as households with unvaccinated cats, breeders or catteries. FPV does not affect humans or dogs but canine parvovirus can occasionally infect cats.

How are cats infected with FPV?

Most cats contract FPV from a contaminated environment via infected faeces rather than from infected cats. The virus passes quickly through the cat and most will only shed FPV in their faeces for a couple of days, although shedding can occur for up to six weeks. However, it is possible for the infection to be passed directly from cat to cat, particularly in environments where lots of cats are in direct contact with each other.

A specialised disinfectant is required to kill FPV.

Which cats are vulnerable to FPV?

Kittens are most susceptible, especially when the protective antibodies they receive in their mother's milk have waned at about four to twelve weeks of age. Unvaccinated adult cats are also susceptible to this disease and allowing booster vaccinations to lapse can be risky.

What are the signs of FPV?

Not all cats infected with FPV show signs but if they do, they may include the following:

- vomiting, bringing up froth or being wet around the lips
- a variable temperature – usually raised in the early stages, and low later on
- hunger and thirst with an inability to eat or drink – affected cats often sit hunched over bowls
- watery diarrhoea with or without blood

Unfortunately, sometimes no obvious signs are present and a cat will die without apparent warning.

If a pregnant queen is infected with FPV, the brains of her unborn kittens may be damaged. When they are born they will have problems with their balance, resulting in a wobbly gait. They may have difficulty feeding as their heads will bob up and down. If you are a breeder and have repeated problems with 'fading kittens' it may mean that your premises are infected with the virus.

How is FPV diagnosed?

The vet will take blood and faecal samples from a sick cat and send them to a veterinary laboratory that will look for signs of the virus and antibodies. If the cat has already died, the vet can send samples of the intestines which can also be tested for the virus.

If you want to know if FPV is present on your premises but none of your cats are presently sick, they can be tested for high levels of antibodies against FPV.

Do FPV carrier cats exist?

No, the virus passes quickly through the cat and most cats will only shed FPV in their faeces for a couple of days, although shedding can occur for up to six weeks.

How is FPV treated?

There is no cure for FPV but if the disease is detected in time, the symptoms can be treated and many cats recover with intensive care including good nursing, fluid therapy and assisted feeding.

How can FPV be prevented?

Vaccination is the main method of prevention. Primary vaccination courses usually start at nine weeks of age with a second injection at twelve weeks of age. Adult cats should receive annual boosters. The FPV vaccine is usually combined with other disease vaccines, such as cat flu and feline leukaemia virus.

Care must be taken when vaccinating pregnant queens against FPV as some vaccines may adversely affect unborn kittens.

Good hygiene, isolation procedures and barrier nursing of infected cats is imperative to prevent spreading this disease to other susceptible cats.

What should I do now that FPV has been diagnosed?

Any areas where infected cats have been and anywhere that the virus may have been spread – for example on the bottom of shoes – will potentially have high levels of the virus, which may be infectious for many months. Disposable aprons, gloves, shoe covers and equipment would be recommended to prevent transmission of the virus to other areas.

It is important to reduce the contamination by removing any faecal matter and thoroughly disinfecting the area with a suitable veterinary disinfectant. Particular attention should be paid to litter trays, food/water bowls and bedding.

The virus can last for many months in the environment, so it is recommended that only cats that have been fully vaccinated are introduced to the area after an outbreak. Susceptible cats or kittens should not be introduced to the contaminated environment for at least a year.

This leaflet is one of a range provided by
Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare
charity and helps more than 193,000 cats and kittens
each year. We rely entirely on public generosity to
finance this vital welfare work.

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Cats Protection, National Cat Centre,
Chelwood Gate, Nr Haywards Heath RH17 7TT

Helpline: 03000 12 12 12 Email: cp@cats.org.uk

Web: www.cats.org.uk VET19-2009 **CODE: 4091**

Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) and SC037711 (Scotland)