

FIV (FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS FIV? (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

- A viral infection that infects **ONLY** cats.
- People or other types of animals **CAN NOT** get this virus.

HOW IS FIV TRANSMITTED?

- Fortunately, the virus itself is very fragile in the environment, and is **hard to catch**. Almost 100% of FIV is passed from one cat to another in a fight, by a deep penetrating bite wound.
- FIV can also be transmitted via blood transfusion.
- Mother to kitten infection is possible, though unusual.
 - Many kittens who initially test positive don't have the disease, they have antibodies from mom, then test negative and stay negative once they are no longer nursing.

HOW IS FIV **NOT TRANSMITTED?**

- Friendly contact between cats like nose-to-nose contact, mutual grooming, sharing toys, food, water and litter does **NOT** appear to be a means of FIV transmission. *(Unfortunately, this same type of contact CAN transmit Feline Leukemia, another infectious feline specific virus)*
- You will not carry FIV particles on your clothing or shoes should you be petting and snuggling a positive cat, then go pet and snuggle a negative cat.

WHAT CLINICAL SIGNS MIGHT MY FIV KITTY SHOW?

- Often, none at all! This is why testing every cat is so important.
- Cats can go many years with **NO** clinical signs of disease.
- They are more likely than other cats to have dental and other oral tissue disease, some need dental extractions at relatively young ages, and do very well even with few or no teeth!
- Common diseases, wounds and infections can be more serious in positive cats than in negative cats, so it's important to keep them healthy and protected.
- FIV+ cats may have a shortened lifespan, succumbing ultimately to infections they can't fight off, or to cancers that are more common in FIV+ kitties, or organ failure.
- However in a controlled environment many will live a normal lifespan!

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WHAT DOES MY FIV+ CAT NEED FROM ME?

- FIV cats really need what most cats need from a good guardian!
- A controlled environment/Indoor only living
- Good and consistent nutrition
- Regular preventative healthcare. This should include a complete annual or twice yearly physical exam, routine vaccinations, flea and other parasite protection.
- A low-stress existence.

CAN MY FIV+ CAT LIVE WITH OTHER CATS?

- This depends on personality and attitude much more than the disease itself.
- Consider opening your home and heart to more than one FIV cat! They certainly can live together.
- FIV + cats can live with healthy FIV – cats with very little risk of disease transmission **AS LONG AS THE CATS ARE FRIENDLY** to each other, and introduced properly. Remember, transmission happens when there is serious fighting. Bite wounds are the primary cause of transmission!
- Any other cats in the household must also have appropriate routine veterinary care to help keep your FIV cat as healthy as possible.

FYI: A comprehensive study by Julie Levy & Idexx, looking at Banfield Data, [67,000 cats in 2000] showed at the end of a 6 year period in 2006:

Out of the 67,000 what % still alive and well after 6 years:

- *90% of uninfected cats*
- *65% of FIV + cats*
- *51% FELV + cats*

OTHER RESOURCES WHERE YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION:

- <http://bestfriends.org/feline-immunodeficiency-virus.aspx>
- http://www.vet.cornell.edu/FHC/health_resources/brochure_fiv.cfm
- <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/cat-care/feline-immunodeficiency-virus-fiv>