

## **FELINE PANLEUKOPENIA FACT SHEET**

- \* **What is it?:** A virus sometimes called feline distemper, but not related to canine distemper
  - \* In the parvovirus family - related to canine parvovirus
  
- \* **Transmission:** Fecal-oral through direct contact between cats (spread in vomit, feces, body secretions) or through fomites (litter boxes, food bowls, cages, hands, shoes)
  - \* Highly contagious
  - \* Very resistant to cleaning and extreme temperatures i.e. can live in the environment for years
  
- \* **Clinical signs:**
  - \* Weakened immune system
  - \* Sudden death
  - \* Fever, lethargy, depression, lack of appetite
  - \* Vomiting, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), dehydration
  - \*\*\* Cat drooping its head over the water bowl, thirsty but too lethargic to drink
  - \* Exposed cats show clinical signs within 14 days after exposure — this is why quarantines are 14 days long
  - \* Cats that are treated and survive panleukopenia can shed virus particles for up to 2 weeks following recovery
  
- \* **Who gets it?:** Usually kittens 3-5 months old
  - \* But it can strike unvaccinated cats of any age
  - \* Not usually adult cats because they either are vaccinated or have survived the virus and have natural immunity
  - \* Kittens infected while mother still pregnant or up to 2 weeks after birth can show neurologic signs (difficulty walking)
  
- \* **Treatment:** There is no treatment for this virus
  - \* Supportive therapy - antibiotics, antivomiting medication, fluids, hospitalization +/- blood transfusions
  - \* Isolation of infected animals during treatment is critical
  
- \* **Diagnosis:**
  - \* Symptoms
  - \* Low white blood cell count on CBC
  - \* Canine in house parvo tests can sometimes pick up the virus (false negatives do occur)
  - \* Can send out feces for lab test for feline panleukopenia
  
- \* **Prevention:** VACCINATION, ISOLATION, DISINFECTION
  - \* FVRCP modified live vaccine (P stands for panleukopenia)
    - \* Starting at 4-8 weeks of age, depending on risk, environment, history
    - \* Boost every 2-4 weeks (depends on risk, environment, history) until 12-16 weeks old
    - \* Boost again at 1 yr of age and then every 3 years
    - \* Pregnant cats - need to assess risk of exposure to virus vs risk of abortion or birth defects (uncommon but possible when vaccinating a pregnant cat) — killed vaccines are safer for pregnant cats but may not induce immunity as fast as modified live
  - \* Parvocidal disinfectant (Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide cleaner recommended) OR
  - \* dilute bleach (1 part bleach: 32 parts water) to clean all surfaces, food bowls, litter pans, cages
  - \* Alcohol hand sanitizers and soap do not kill panleukopenia virus

## **CALVERT WELL PET AND PANLEUKOPENIA**

- \* There have been confirmed cases of feline panleukopenia in Calvert and St Mary's County over the last few months, although luckily none so far at CWP
- \* Our goal is to prevent the entrance of the virus into our facility
- \* Any sick kitten or cat exhibiting the above mentioned clinical signs must be considered possible panleukopenia

\* These clients may be asked to remain in their vehicles and to call the front desk when they arrive so that we can come out to the vehicle to get them checked in, examine, and possibly test the kitten

\* Virus particles can be tracked over the grass, concrete, front porch, front office, exam room, exam table, etc; so, we are doing everything that we can to prevent this from occurring

\* We are a high-volume clinic that sees many kittens from shelters and colonies with unknown vaccine status, so our risk of possible contamination is most likely higher than at a regular private veterinary practice

\* We use a parvocidal cleaner (proven to kill the panleukopenia virus) and dilute bleach to clean all surfaces, food bowls, cages, floors...anywhere that virus particles may be hiding.

\* We are temporarily changing our vaccine recommendations for kittens that are at high risk for exposure or that may have come from a high-risk environment (kittens from feral mothers, colonies, traps, shelters, unknown history) by recommending that these kittens start FVRCP modified live as early as 4 weeks of age and vaccinating every 2-3 weeks until 16 weeks of age

WE APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING WHILE WE CONTINUE TO TAKE MEASURES TO KEEP OUR CLINIC AND PETS SAFE