



Cat Flu

Feline Upper Respiratory Tract infection, or 'cat flu' as it is generally known as, is a common and highly contagious disease affected cats and kittens. Typically kittens and older cats are the most at risk and worst affected due to a weaker immune system, however any cat can become infected.

Cat flu is spread by direct contact between cats, through saliva, tears or nasal discharge. It can also be spread indirectly, such as via contaminated food bowls, bedding, litter trays etc. As such, any cats who are sick with cat flu must be separated from other cats until they are fully recovered. It is also important that food bowls, litter trays and bedding be washed separately. Typically, recover takes around two weeks.

While cat flu is contagious to cats, it cannot be spread to humans or other animals.

Treatment/Prevention.

Cat flu is a preventable disease and one of the main reasons it is important that all kittens and adult cats be vaccinated. Vaccination should start at 6-8 weeks of age, and booster vaccinations should be given at 10-12 weeks and 14-16 weeks of age. During this time kittens should be kept indoors and away from unknown cats. All cats should also receive yearly boosters to ensure they are fully immunised and protected against disease.

An F3 vaccination will help to prevent against FHV and FCV, while an F4 vaccination will protect against both those and *Chlamydomphila*. Vaccination can also help to reduce the severity of symptoms in those cats who become ill.

If your cat does become exposed or is displaying clinical signs of cat flu, it is important to take the to a veterinarian. Some cats may require medication such as antibiotics in order to recover.

What are the signs of cat flu?

Signs vary between patient, but common signs include:

- Sudden onset sneezing
- Clear discharge from the nose
- Watery/runny eyes
- Excess salivation or mouth ulcers
- Ulcers to the surface of the eye (corneal ulcer)
- Some cats may have more serious signs of illness such as fever, dehydration and inappetence.

What causes cat flu?

Just like the common cold in humans, there are many different viruses and bacterias that can cause cat flu.

The most common are feline herpes virus (FHV), feline calicivirus (FCV), *Chlamydomphila* and many others.

Diagnosis

Often diagnosis is based on clinical signs. However in some cases; oral, nasal and throat swabs may be taken in order to determine the exact cause of the infection. These are sent to a veterinary pathologist for PCR

