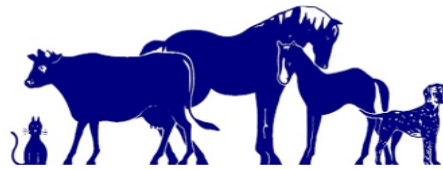


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WANGARATTA VETERINARY CLINIC

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Friendly service and professional care for all.

FIV (Feline AIDS)

FIV is a virus that causes a cat's immune system to destroy itself. Without a functioning immune system, the cat is unable to fight off infections. FIV doesn't cause specific symptoms, however, affected cats will get sick over and over again and require much more intensive treatment when they are unwell.

Testing of cats in Eastern Australia found FIV infection in:

- 20% of feral cats
- 8% of pet cats with outdoor access
- 0% of indoor only cats

Some important things for you to know:

- People CANNOT catch FIV from cats
- Cats may be infected and not show any signs of illness for years
- There is no cure for FIV; we manage infected cats by treating illnesses as they arise, keeping the cat as stress free as possible and minimising the chances of catching illnesses.
- FIV only lasts a few hours in the environment and is killed by bleach and most disinfectants

How is FIV spread?

- FIV is spread from blood and saliva- so a deep bite during a fight is the most common way to be infected
- Grooming each other and sharing food and water bowls does **not** seem to spread FIV.
- Kittens rarely catch FIV from their mother during pregnancy or birth
- Sexual transmission does **not** appear to be a significant cause of disease spread

What am I likely to see if my cat is sick from FIV?

- Weight loss
- Off food
- Fever
- Getting sick frequently and taking a long time to recover

How do we diagnose FIV:

- We take a small sample of blood and run a test at the clinic
- There are some things to be aware of with the test results, though:
 - In late stages of FIV, the immune system may be so badly damaged that infected cats can test negative
 - Similarly, in early stages of the disease, there may not yet be antibodies to FIV so these cats will also test negative

- False positives results can occur, so if we have a cat test positive, we will send the blood away to a lab to confirm the positive result
- FIV vaccination will also cause the test to give a positive result

How do we treat FIV?

- Unfortunately, there is no cure for FIV
- We provide supportive care and treat infections as they arise

How do I look after my FIV infected cat?

- Infected cats can live happily for years before becoming unwell from FIV
- Keep them indoors to minimise the spread of FIV and minimise the risk of them catching any other disease from other cats
- Desex them – to minimise spread through fighting, roaming and pregnancy
- Feed a good quality balanced diet, avoid raw foods and dairy due to higher numbers of bacteria which may cause disease
- Have a checkup and examination with us every 6 months
- Blood test once yearly
- If you have a cat test positive to FIV, other cats in the household need to be tested also
- Ideally separate infected cats from uninfected cats to minimise spread, however, if the cat relationships are stable (**no fighting!**) then the chance of spread of FIV is minimal and they can continue to be housed together

How do I prevent my cat from catching FIV?

- **Minimise exposure**
 - **Indoor only cat with lots of environmental enrichment is best (an outside enclosure is also OK)**
 - Desex your cats – male undesexed cats out in the neighbourhood are the most at risk
 - Be careful introducing new cats into your household – have them FIV tested first to make sure they don't have the disease.
- **Vaccination**
 - 3 vaccines are given 2 weeks apart, then an annual vaccination to maintain your cat's protection