

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Feline Leukemia and FIV

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Feline Leukemia is a virus that kills more cats than any other infectious disease. **FIV** or **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus** is the second most common killer. It is estimated that over 13% of cats are infected with Feline Leukemia and around 7% with FIV.

Both viruses are spread through contact with body fluids. This includes **bite wounds** and **mutual grooming**. Infected female cats will give birth to infected kittens. Tomcats may spread the disease when fighting and breeding.

Those cats that are exposed may **recover** completely, **die** from the disease within a few months, or go into remission and become **carriers** of the infection. The life span of a Feline Leukemia carrier is shorter than a virus free individual and they are seven times more likely to have health problems. More than 70% die from the disease.

Have you ever seen a **thin, congested, sick looking cat** roaming the neighborhood? Chances are excellent he is infected with one or both of these diseases and is spreading it to other cats he comes into contact with.

It is important to **have your cat tested for both of these diseases** even if he has never been around other cats since he could have been infected at birth. Even if your cat appears normal now, it is important that we know if he is a carrier. Even if he has been tested and vaccinated for feline leukemia, it is still a good idea to test him regularly. It is best to **test 2 or 3 months after any suspicious wounds** or known exposure to a stray or infected cat. An infected cat does not have to be put to sleep and can have a normal life. But it is important that we know if he has one of these diseases.

Serious symptoms include **pale gums, weakness, loss of appetite, gum disease, vomiting, diarrhea, chronic respiratory infections, and enlarged lymph nodes or he may have no symptoms at all.**

There is a vaccine to protect your cat from feline leukemia and one is now available for FIV. But the best way to protect your cat is to **spay or neuter** early and **keep your pet indoors** since roaming,

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breeding, and fighting puts them at the greatest risk. If you have any questions, please give us a call at 952-3643. 🐾