



勝利動物醫院
Victory Animal Hospital

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Feline Herpesvirus infection or Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

What is feline viral rhinotracheitis?

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis (FVR) is an infectious disease caused by feline herpesvirus type-1.

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis is a major cause of upper respiratory disease in cats, and is the most common cause of conjunctivitis (inflammation of the tissues surrounding the eye, especially the lining of the lids and the third eyelid).



How does a cat become infected with feline herpesvirus?

An infection occurs when a susceptible cat comes into direct contact with an infected cat.

How long is a cat infectious after getting the virus?

Once a cat is infected with FVR, there is usually a 2–5 day incubation period before it shows symptoms of disease. The cat can infect other cats during this incubation period. In most cases, once symptoms appear the active infection will last about 10–20 days. All cats that have been infected with FVR will become carriers of this virus; most carriers will be latent, meaning that the virus will survive in an inactive form within the cat's body. Stress may cause the virus to become reactivated, and if the virus becomes reactivated.

How can the virus be killed?

The virus is readily killed in the environment by disinfectants, as long as the disinfectant contacts all contaminated surfaces. A bleach solution is an effective disinfectant for surface disinfection or for use on objects that can be bleached. Contaminated objects should be soaked in bleach solution for a minimum of 5 minutes. Blankets or toys can also be disinfected by regular machine washing using hot water and detergent.

All cats can become infected with FVR infections, but infection tends to be more severe in young animals or animals that have another chronic disease. Kittens born to a cat that is carrying a latent FVR infection may become infected after birth. In these kittens, symptoms usually develop several weeks after birth, and the infection can be very serious.



The typical symptoms of FVR involve the nose, throat and eyes, and include sneezing, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis (inflammation of the tissues that line the eyelids and surround the eyes), excessive blinking, and discharges from the eyes and nose that range from clear and watery to thick and purulent (containing pus).

Other non-specific symptoms may include fever, lethargy, anorexia or poor appetite, and enlarged lymph nodes.

How is this infection diagnosed?

Several different infectious agents can cause upper respiratory disease in cats, with subtle differences in examination findings between the different diseases. A presumptive diagnosis of feline viral rhinotracheitis is based primarily on a cat's medical history and symptoms combined with the findings on a physical examination.

Specific identification of FVR virus particles may be made by collecting samples of cells and discharges from the nose, eyes or back of the throat. Identification of feline herpesvirus DNA is the most sensitive test available for diagnosing infection by FHV-1. Unfortunately, if the virus is in a latent state, diagnostic testing is usually not rewarding.

What is the treatment for this infection?

Cats with an uncomplicated infection caused by feline viral rhinotracheitis will usually be treated symptomatically. Treatment will be determined by the specific clinical signs and problems that your cat is showing.

Conjunctivitis and keratitis may be treated with topical eye medications. It is extremely important to treat corneal ulcers aggressively in order to prevent permanent damage to the eyes.

Although viral infections like FVR are not directly treated by the use of antibacterial drugs, broad spectrum antibacterial drugs are often prescribed in an effort to prevent secondary bacterial infections from complicating the disease, particularly in kittens.

If a cat is dehydrated, depressed, or has a severe case of illness, your veterinarian will recommend hospitalization for more intensive treatment, including intravenous fluids and other supportive treatments.

Are other cats in the household at risk of infection?

A cat that has an acute feline viral rhinotracheitis infection will be infective to other cats during the incubation period and for up to 3 weeks after developing symptoms.

Affected cats must be isolated from other cats to avoid further spread of disease. It is always prudent to isolate any new cat from the other cats in your household for at least 1–2 weeks to minimize transmission of any infectious diseases.

How can this disease be prevented?

The standard 'core' vaccines that are given to cats include a vaccine against feline viral rhinotracheitis. The FVR vaccine will not completely prevent an infection from occurring if your cat is exposed to the virus, but it will significantly reduce the severity of the infection and will shorten the length of the illness. Solid immunity to these viruses is not long term, and may be overcome by exposure to a high dose of virus. Therefore, the FVR vaccine needs to be boosted on a regular basis – your veterinarian will advise you on the recommended booster schedule for your individual cat, based on its lifestyle and risk of disease.



What is the prognosis for a cat diagnosed with feline viral rhinotracheitis?

There is no cure for herpesvirus infections. The therapeutic goal is to reduce the frequency and severity of recurrences. Most cats respond well to medical management of the condition and lead normal lives. Minimizing the chance of infection, feeding a premium diet, supplementing the diet with L-lysine daily, reducing stressful situations and following an appropriate vaccination schedule are your cat's best defense against this disease.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH ©

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