



Mason County PAWS Humane Society
Mason County, Michigan

FELINE DISTEMPER FELINE PANLEUKOPENIA (FPV) FELINE PARVO

WHAT IS FELINE DISTEMPER OR PANLEUKOPENIA (FPV) OR FELINE PARVO?

Feline distemper, also called feline panleukopenia, or feline parvo, is a highly contagious viral disease of cats caused by the feline parvovirus. The feline parvovirus attacks and kills cells that divide rapidly, such as those in the intestine and those produced in the bone marrow. While the disease can be fatal it is often curable.

Kittens aged between 2 and 6 months are the most vulnerable to the disease, followed by pregnant and immune-compromised cats.

The name "feline distemper" should not be confused with "canine distemper." Although their names are similar, they are caused by different viruses.

These viruses do not infect people.

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL SYMPTOMS OF FELINE DISTEMPER?

FPV symptoms can be similar to several other diseases including poisoning, pancreatitis, feline leukemia, feline immunodeficiency virus and others.

Cats suffering from the disease are likely to experience diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, malnutrition and anemia. Symptoms include depression, loss of appetite, lethargy, and tail and back leg biting. A cat will typically have a blood count that is low in white and red blood cells.

HOW DO CATS GET FELINE DISTEMPER?

Feline distemper virus is shed in all body secretions and excretions of affected animals. Recovered animals may shed virus for months. Fleas and other insects, especially flies, may play a role in transmission of the disease. The route of infection is either inhalation or ingestion of infective material by a susceptible host.

TREATMENT AND CONTROL

No treatment other than supportive care and prevention of secondary bacterial infection exists for feline distemper. If the cat's immune system is strong enough, and the supportive care being provided by the medical staff is aggressive enough, some cats can survive this infection.

Prevention is the best course of action for feline distemper. Today, there are vaccines that offer protection from feline parvovirus infection. Vaccination is just as important for strictly indoor cats as for indoor/outdoor cats because the virus is everywhere in the environment. Most young kittens receive their first vaccination between 6 and 8 weeks of age, and follow-up vaccines are given until the kitten is around 16 weeks of age.

Useful links:

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79136_79608_85016-26505--,00.html