

Kitten Virus Guide

Feline Herpesvirus 1 (FHV-1 / Viral Rhinotracheitis)



Risk Level: High (Causes chronic, lifetime latent upper respiratory infections).

Transmission: Direct exposure to infectious respiratory or ocular secretions, virus dies when dried up.

Diagnosis:

- **Clinical Presentation:** Diagnosed primarily on symptoms (ocular discharge combined with corneal involvement).
- **Fluorescein Dye Stain:** Identifies classic (branching) corneal ulcers under blue light.
- **Conjunctival/Nasal PCR Swab:** Detects viral DNA from eye or nasal swabs to confirm latent or active FHV-1.

Symptoms: Sneezing, heavy nasal discharge, severe conjunctivitis, congestion, corneal ulcers, fever, loss of appetite.

Treatment: Ocular antivirals (e.g. Cidofovir), oral antivirals (famciclovir), nebulisation, face cleaning, supportive antibiotics for secondary infections.

Other Information: Incubation Period 2-5 days, 10-60 days of symptoms, **part of core vaccine schedule.**

Feline Calicivirus (FCV)



Risk Level: Moderate to High (Key driver of painful oral ulcers and upper respiratory illness).

Transmission: Saliva, aerosolised sneeze droplets, and shared food/water bowls, survives for up to 1 month in environment.

Diagnosis:

- **Clinical Presentation:** Painful ulcers on the tongue, gums, or hard palate, upper respiratory symptoms.
- **PCR Swab Panel:** Oropharyngeal or nasal swabs submitted for viral RNA testing to differentiate FCV from herpesvirus.
- **Joint Tap / X-rays:** Performed occasionally in cases with severe shifting "limping syndrome" to rule out other joint pathology.

Symptoms: Oral ulcers, drooling, fever, shifting leg lameness ("limping syndrome"), Nasal & ocular discharge and congestion.

Treatment: Pain relief (e.g. buprenorphine), soft/warmed foods or syringe feeding, fluids for dehydration, and systemic antibiotics (Azithromycin) for secondary infections.

Other Information: Incubation Period 2-6 days, 2-3 weeks symptoms. No cure, cats can be carriers for life and shed the virus. **Part of core vaccine schedule.**

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)



Risk Level: High Serious retrovirus. Causes immunosuppression, bone marrow failure, and lymphoma.

Transmission: Saliva through "friendly" contact (grooming, shared bowls), wounds from fighting, usually maternal transmission in utero or via milk. Survives a few hours in environment.

Diagnosis:

- **ELISA SNAP Test:** Detects free FeLV p27 antigen in whole blood or serum (identifies active viremia). Can be false positive/negative as test only provides "snapshot in time testing."
- **IFA (Immunofluorescence Assay):** Should be used to confirm if the virus has invaded the bone marrow cells.
- **Real-Time PCR:** Differentiates between progressive (active) and regressive (latent/integrated) infections.

Symptoms: Progressive anaemia (pale gums), chronic non-healing infections, fever, weight loss, enlarged lymph nodes.

Treatment: No cure; focus is on supportive care, early antibiotic treatment for secondary infections, high-calorie nutrition, and strict indoor isolation.

Other Information: Incubation period 4-30 weeks. **Part of core vaccine schedule.**

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Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV/Feline Distemper/Parvovirus)



Risk Level: Critical (Extremely high mortality in unvaccinated kittens). Virus attacks rapidly dividing cells- gut and bone marrow highly impacted in kittens.

Transmission: Highly infectious. Direct contact with bodily fluids (faeces, vomit); survives on surfaces/fomites for up to a year.

Diagnosis:

- **In-Clinic Faecal Antigen SNAP Test:** Rapid canine parvovirus test kits are cross-reactive and commonly used to detect FPV antigen in faeces.
- **Complete Blood Count (CBC):** Reveals severe, profound leukopenia (a massive drop in overall white blood cells).
- **PCR Testing:** Faecal PCR for viral DNA confirms the diagnosis if SNAP testing is inconclusive.

Symptoms: Liquid/bloody diarrhoea, profuse vomiting, high fever, hypothermia, rapid dehydration, inappetence, extreme lethargy, sudden death.

Treatment: Emergency hospitalisation, aggressive IV fluid therapy, anti-nausea medications, broad-spectrum IV antibiotics (for secondary sepsis), pain management, and nutritional support.

Other Information: Incubation Period 3-14 days, symptoms 3-7 days, **part of core vaccine schedule.**

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) (mutated coronavirus FCoV)



Risk Level: Critical Caused by a mutated Feline Coronavirus, virus mutates in 5% of cats and kittens.

Transmission: The benign coronavirus spreads via faeces (shared litter trays). The mutation into FIP occurs internally within individual kittens or cats with low immunity and is generally not contagious. The virus attacks the immune system and white blood cells. Survives in environment for up to 7 weeks.

Symptoms:

- **Effusive ("Wet") FIP:** Fluid in the abdomen (pot-belly appearance) or chest (difficulty breathing), chronic fluctuating fever, rapid weight loss.
- **Non-Effusive ("Dry") FIP:** Lesions on organs, neurological signs (unsteady gait, seizures), eye inflammation (cloudiness, uveitis).

Diagnosis:

- **In-Clinic Faecal Antigen SNAP Test:** Rapid canine parvovirus test kits are cross-reactive and commonly used to detect FPV antigen in faeces.
- **Complete Blood Count (CBC):** Reveals severe, profound leukopenia (a massive drop in overall white blood cells).
- **PCR Testing:** **Faecal PCR** for viral DNA confirms the diagnosis if SNAP testing is inconclusive.

Treatment: Antiviral Therapy: Target antivirals (**GS-441524** or oral compounded alternatives / Remdesivir) administered for a 12-week daily treatment course.

Supportive Care: Abdominocentesis or thoracocentesis (draining excess fluid) if breathing is compromised, along with anti-inflammatory support.

Other Information: Incubation Period Days to weeks, currently no vaccine.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)



Risk Level: Moderate (Slow progression; lower risk in young kittens).

Transmission: Deep bite wounds ("unfriendly" contact) or maternal transfer in utero or via milk. Can survive a few days in the environment.

Diagnosis:

- **In-Clinic ELISA SNAP Test:** Detects maternal or true viral antibodies.
- **Confirmatory Retesting:** Kittens testing positive under 6 months must be retested after 6 months of age, as maternal antibodies passed from an infected mother can trigger a false positive.
- **PCR Testing:** Directly detects FIV proviral DNA to confirm true infection in young kittens with maternal antibodies.

Symptoms: Recurrent skin/respiratory infections, chronic gingivitis/stomatitis, gradual weight loss.

Treatment: Symptomatic management of secondary infections, regular health check-ups, dental care, and strict indoor maintenance.

Other Information: Incubation period weeks to months. Not part of core vaccine schedule.