



ALLEY CAT RESCUE

AN ALLIANCE FOR CAT PROTECTION

P.O. BOX 96499 WASHINGTON DC 20007 • 301 277 5595 • ACR@SAVEACAT.ORG

Feline Panleukopenia

Feline panleukopenia, also called feline distemper or feline parvo, used to be the leading cause of death in cats. Now, thanks to modern medicine, it is an uncommon disease for cats. The feline distemper vaccine effectively prevents feline panleukopenia in cats.

Feline panleukopenia is a highly contagious and potentially fatal virus caused by the feline parvovirus. The virus infects and kills cells in the bone marrow and intestines and is spread through a cat's urine, stool, and nasal discharge. It can also survive in the environment for up to a year and can be spread through contamination. Kittens are the most affected by the virus, likely because they live in close quarters to their siblings and because of their weakened immune system. Although it is easily spread among cats, it is not contagious to people.

Symptoms:

- Depression
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Loss of balance
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Excessive sneezing
- Runny nose

Diagnosis:

If you believe your cat has feline panleukopenia, take her to the veterinarian IMMEDIATELY! The veterinarian will perform a physical examination and review the cat's history, including previous vaccinations. The veterinarian may also order a fecal evaluation to test for the virus.

Treatment:

Unfortunately for kittens under eight weeks old, the chances of survival are slim. Older cats are more likely to survive, especially if treatment is given early on. There is no medication that can kill the virus so treatment usually involves treating the symptoms and providing fluids so the cat's immune system can fight off the virus.

If there have multiple cats in your home, isolate the infected cat from the rest of the cats to prevent contamination. Make sure to thoroughly clean the whole affected area with diluted bleach, as the virus can stay in the environment for up to a year.

Prevention:

Since feline panleukopenia is a deadly virus, it is vital to prevent infection in the first place by having your kitten/cat vaccinated against the virus. The distemper vaccination also protects against feline herpesvirus, calicivirus, and sometimes feline leukemia. Kittens should receive their first vaccination against the virus between 6 and 8 weeks of age with a booster vaccine given every 4 weeks until the kitten is 16 weeks old. Following the last dose of the initial vaccination series, a single dose vaccine is given 1 year later. From there (for adult cats), the vaccine is given either on a 1-year cycle or 3-year cycle, depending on risk factors. Speak to your veterinarian regarding your cat's risk factors and which vaccine schedule is more appropriate. For most cats, a 3-year cycle is sufficient.

References:

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