

FIV is a fairly common cat virus.

FIV was only identified in 1986 (although it had probably been around for hundreds of years before that)

Because it has only been known about for around 30 years, we are still learning about it.

When it was first identified, there were lots of studies carried out which formed the basis of understanding of the virus from the start.

It is only in the last 20 years or so, when more and more FIV cats have been allowed to live their normal lives, that we are learning that the original studies gave a false impression.

Today's 'facts' should be based on the real-life experience, rather than those early studies, but therein lies the problem, most real-life experience is not documented, and is therefore not available for the official bodies to benefit from, so much that one reads today is still based on those early studies.

So what do we really know?

FIV attaches itself to some cells which are part of the immune system.

The virus is very slow acting, so the time taken for there to be sufficient damage to the immune system to actually affect the health of the cat is many years.

Most cats with FIV maintain strong immune systems for many years, often all their lives. Most FIV cats live normal length of lives if properly cared for.

The virus only affects cats, and cannot be passed to other species, either animal or human.

The virus has only been shown to be transmitted via a bite. In the last 20 years there is no evidence of transmission via sharing food bowls or mutual grooming.

How do you care for an FIV+ cat?

Just the same as you look after any other cat really, but just being aware of the virus and what effect it may or may not have.

Basically your cat needs good food, a stress-free environment and attention if any health issues should appear. Just like looking after any cat!

Food

A good mixed diet is important for the health of any cat, and FIV cats are just the same. Best avoid a limited diet of one type or brand of food; give good quality, with some variety is the basic advice. This will help keep any cat in the best of health which, in turn will maintain the immune system at its strongest.

Environment

The environment in which a cat lives has a strong influence on its wellbeing. A stressful environment will put strain on all systems, including the immune system, so be aware of how your cat reacts to the environment - does the cat hide when visitors come? Is he/she always trying to get outside? Be aware of anything that seems to cause stress, and see if you can reduce that element.

Source – www.fivcats.com

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family.

Introduction to FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

FIV is one of the fairly common cat viruses, but it
is much misunderstood.

Cats with FIV need everyone to understand the
realities of the virus.

We know that FIV is a much misunderstood virus
and over the years this misunderstanding has
resulted in many otherwise healthy cats being
euthanized - quite unnecessarily. So it is
important for everyone to understand at least the
basics about the virus.

The FIV virus reduces a cat's immune system,
slowly (over several years) this can leave it more
vulnerable to other feline infections later in life.

- That is all -

In itself FIV is not life threatening. FIV is cat
specific, it CANNOT be transmitted to humans

What are the biggest misunderstandings?

Most people don't realize that most cats with FIV
have a strong immune system. It is only after many
years that there may be sufficient decline for the
effects of the virus to be evident, most FIV cats are
perfectly healthy for most of their lives. Even for
those who start to show effects, most infections
can be handled by appropriate medications.

So why has this misunderstanding come about?

The FIV cats that do suffer, are those that are long-
term strays, who have survived on a poor diet and
probably been involved in fights, with subsequent
injuries going untreated - this is the scenario that
leads to the suffering that is wrongly thought to be
common to all FIVs.

In our experience, FIV positive cats can have, and
deserve to have, a long and healthy life. Like all
cats, they need careful attention to their general
health and diet, but this is no more than any cat
should receive.

A properly cared for FIV cat need not have a
shortened life expectancy. The effectiveness of all
cats' immune systems reduce with age. Not many
would recommend euthanasia just because a cat is
getting elderly, so why so with FIV?

Why is FIV so feared by some?

It is a combination of the misunderstanding about
the health implications, and the fact that the virus
can be transmitted to other cats (only cats - no
other species).

In the vast majority of cases, it is transmitted
through biting. Cats fight for three main reasons:
food, territory and mating. By providing a regular
food supply and neutering, the need to fight is
dramatically reduced, making the transmission of
FIV far less likely.

A FIV cat should not have to die!

Euthanasia of FIV cats is a vast over reaction, but
it still happens due to a lack of understanding
about the true nature of the virus.

There are many unidentified FIV cats
everywhere, and most cats will come in contact
with ones carrying the virus at some point, but,
without fighting, there is no reason for them to
become infected.

Correcting some of the basic misconceptions about FIV:

- 1 FIV is not in itself a life-threatening disease
- 2 FIV does not 'destroy' the immune system
- 3 FIV is not 'Cat AIDS'
- 4 FIV is not contagious to humans
- 5 FIV does not have to shorten life expectancy.
- 6 FIV cats do not have to be segregated
- 7 FIV cannot be transferred to other species

FIV is a virus that affects the cat's immune
system, it acts very slowly, and it is often several
years before the cat shows any signs of a
damaged immune system - many never suffer at
all!

In time, FIV can make a cat more susceptible to
other infections, but these can be dealt with in
just the same way as with any other cat.

In any animal (and human), their immune
response varies in effectiveness from time to
time depending on their general health. When
we get run-down what do we do? - We take a
tonic, get more sleep, have better food, take a
holiday, we then regain our strength. The same is
true of FIV positive cats - with good care, good
food, and security, and preventing stressful
circumstances, they seem to recover from most
secondary infections just like non-FIV cats.

Source - www.fivcats.com