

# ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FELINE AIDS! (FIV)

### What is feline AIDS?

Feline AIDS is caused by infection with feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). FIV causes a potentially fatal viral disease that interferes with the immune system of a cat.

The virus lives in the blood of the infected cat and is carried in its system throughout its life.

Infected cats may expose healthy cats with which they come into contact, nearly always through bite wounds.

Cats infected with FIV may remain healthy for up to 10 years. While some infected cats show no sign of disease, others may display initial symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhoea
- Lethargy
- Swollen lymph nodes

As the disease progresses, symptoms may occur such as:

- Weight loss
- Sores in and around the mouth
- Eye lesions
- Poor coat
- Chronic infections

Eventually the immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections or diseases. As a result, the cat will die from one of these subsequent infections.

### How prevalent is feline AIDS?

It is reported that between 14% & 29% of cats in Australia test FIV positive to the disease.

### How is the disease contracted?

FIV is spread from cat to cat primarily through bite wounds, the virus being shed in high levels through saliva. Outdoor cats are at a higher risk for contracting the disease. The spread of FIV through watering bowls or grooming is unlikely. An actual bite wound is an integral part of the disease transmission. Although rare, it is possible for a mother to pass the infection on to her unborn foetus.

### What can I do to prevent feline AIDS?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease in at-risk cats. There is no treatment or cure for an FIV infected cat. A vaccine is available that will aid in the

prevention of infection by FIV. Talk to your local Vet about the best vaccination program for your cat.

Along with vaccination, other health management measures include:

- Limiting exposure of indoor cats to outdoor cats
- Using caution when introducing a new cat to a multi-cat household
- Having a new cat tested prior to joining the household
- Isolating an aggressive cat from other cats

### **FIV vaccination guideline**

Unvaccinated cats – those cats presented at 8 weeks of age or older require 3 doses at an intervaccination interval of 2 – 4 weeks.

Vaccinated cats – Annual vaccination is recommended.

### **NB.**

**Even though this feline virus is related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), No human has ever been reported to be infected with FIV.**