



Factsheet – Cat Flu

Cat Flu, or Feline Virus, is the most common contagious and infectious disease in cats. It is an Upper Respiratory Tract Infection that can be caused by a number of different viruses, and will be more commonly seen in unvaccinated cats.

What is Cat Flu?

Cat Flu is a term used to describe an Upper Respiratory Tract Infection in felines, and can be caused by various infections. The majority of cases will be caused by one of two viruses, feline herpes virus type 1 (FHV-1) and feline calicivirus (FCV). FHV-1 is also known as feline rhinotracheitis virus.

Signs and Symptoms

- 🐾 Sneezing
- 🐾 Conjunctivitis
- 🐾 Clear discharge from the nose and eyes
- 🐾 Dull and depressed demeanor
- 🐾 Raised body temperature
- 🐾 Low appetite
- 🐾 Occasionally, skin lesions and pneumonia

How is it cured or treated?

Just as in the case of the common cold, Cat Flu is not “cured”, but must run its course. Antibiotics will sometimes be prescribed to prevent secondary infection, but these medications will not cure the disease.

The best treatment is prevention, by ensuring that your cat is vaccinated every 12 months to provide them with protection.

Does Cat Flu only occur in Catteries?

No, absolutely not. Since these viruses can be present anywhere and can travel considerable distances through the air, they can affect any cat, even one which never leaves its own back yard. Cat flu is even seen in indoor only cats that are unvaccinated as it travels in the air, so indoor cats are just as at risk as air from outside travels into your house via air conditioners, or open windows and

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doors. All unvaccinated cats are at risk, but ones that spend time outside around other cats are a significantly increased risk.

Are the viruses a constant problem?

No. Cat Flu, like the human flu, is often seasonal. It also tends to be epidemic. When veterinarians begin to see cases, they normally come from every pet related business or activity in the area, as well as from individual cat owners who have indoor only cats. When the outbreak is over, they might not see another case for months.

Can my cat be vaccinated to protect them against Cat Flu?

Yes! Vaccination may not prevent your cat becoming infected but will drastically reduce the severity of the disease, often to the point that all that is noticed is mild transient lethargy and inappetence for a few days.

Before boarding your Cat, you need to ensure that they have a minimum of an F3 vaccination which is current and has been given every 12 months of life. Your veterinarian is in the best position to recommend a program of preventative health care management depending on your pet's needs.

Can the Cattery prevent my cat from catching Cat Flu?

Unfortunately, no amount of supervision, sanitation, or personalised care can prevent a cat from "catching" an airborne virus. Just as your child's school has no way of preventing a flu outbreak, a pet boarding facility has no way of preventing viral outbreaks. Schools, hotels, and pet boarding facilities alike cannot be held responsible for any virus outbreak.

Instead, a good boarding facility will recommend immunisation against Cat Flu, refuse to board any obviously sick cat, listen and watch for any signs of sickness, and make sure that any cat requiring veterinary attention receives it as quickly as possible. The pet owner is financially responsible for such care.

What should you do if you cat is diagnosed with Cat Flu?

If you are due to board your cat at your local Cattery, you will need to call them and let them know that your pet is too unwell to attend boarding. Whilst your pet is recovering at home, you can help them but encouraging them to eat and drink regularly, keeping their eyes and nose clear by wiping any discharge away regularly, and keeping an eye on them to track any decline in their condition. Severely ill cats will need to be hospitalized for close monitoring and recovery.

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What are carrier cats?

Some cats can be 'carriers' of Cat Flu, which means that they are infected but are not showing any clinical signs. Carriers are only infectious to other cats when they are actively shedding the virus. Around 80% of cats that have been infected with Cat Flu become carriers, and they usually shed intermittently (most often during times of stress).

For this reason, it is important that you let your Boarding Cattery know if your cat is a known Cat Flu carrier and is due to stay for a holiday, as they will put in place various protocols to ensure that your cat is monitored for any sign of shedding, and that any chances of cross-contamination of the virus are minimised.

Summary of Points:

- 🐾 **Cat Flu is one of the most common upper respiratory infections in cats.**
- 🐾 **No amount of supervision, sanitization, or personalised care can prevent a cat from "catching" an airborne virus such as Cat Flu.**
- 🐾 **A large percentage of cats who are infected with Cat Flu become "carriers", which means they are infected but not showing signs. These cats can infect other cats when they "shed" the virus.**
- 🐾 **Prevention is the best cure, by ensuring that your cat is fully vaccinated and kept current. Whilst this does not prevent them from getting the virus, it will significantly reduce the severity of the infection.**

For more information, contact the Australian Pet Care Association anytime by emailing us at info@australianpetcareassociation.com.au

Further Factsheets can be found by visiting us at <https://www.australianpetcareassociation.com.au/factsheets/>

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