

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is a retrovirus that affects cats worldwide. It can be transmitted through saliva, blood, and, to a lesser degree, through urine and feces. The virus is most commonly spread through close contact, such as grooming, fighting, or sharing food and water dishes with an infected cat. Kittens can also contract the virus from their mother while in the womb or through nursing.

Health Implications - FeLV can suppress the immune system, leading to a variety of health issues, including anemia, lymphoma, and infections that healthy cats would normally fight off. Not all cats that are exposed to FeLV will become permanently infected. Some may be able to fight off the virus or only carry it temporarily.

The symptoms of FeLV can vary widely, from mild signs like fever and lethargy to more severe health issues including weight loss, infections, and even cancer. Because FeLV affects the immune system, infected cats are more prone to developing other diseases.

Diagnosing FeLV involves a quick blood test, about 10 minutes, requiring only a small blood sample from your cat, and can be done in-house during a routine veterinary visit. We recommend testing for all new feline additions to your household, any cat that has been exposed to an unknown or FeLV-positive cat, and cats that go outdoors or show symptoms of illness. Prevention is key in managing FeLV. Keeping your cat indoors, away from potentially infected cats, is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus. Vaccinating your cat against FeLV is also recommended, especially if they spend time outdoors or live in a multi-cat household where the infection status of all cats is not known.

Management and Care - While there is no cure for FeLV, with proper management, infected cats can enjoy a good quality of life. This includes regular veterinary check-ups, keeping them indoors, and ensuring they live in a stress-free environment. If your cat has not been tested for FeLV or if you have any concerns about your cat's health or exposure to FeLV, please reach out to us.