

The Practical Approach to Feline Retroviruses

Here are some take home points from the program, The Practical Approach to Feline Retroviruses which was presented by Lynn Buzhardt, DVM on July 10th, 2007.

FeLv Testing

- 30% of cats will seroconvert to positive after exposure to FeLv with in 1-3 months, then 1-3 months later, seroconvert to negative again.
- 30% of cats will seroconvert to positive after exposure to FeLv with in 1-3 months and and be persistantly infected and shed virus.
- 30% of cats will not seroconvert, but suppress the virus in the bone marrow, and never shed virus, or recrudescence at an older age when the immune system deteriorates.
- 14% of cats with gingivitis have a retroviral disease.
- 24% of cats with stomatitis have a retroviral disease
- 19% of cats with cat bite abcesses have a retroviral disease.

- Maternal, Nursing antibodies, or vaccination will not interfere with testing.

Felv Testing Protocol

Retest all positive cats every 20 days for 4 months. If positive at 120 days, cat will always be positive; OR submit IFA in 60 days.

Retest negative cats every 30 days for 90 days. If still negative, will remain so.

Discordant cats are Elisa positive and IFA negative but should be treated as positive.

FIV testing

ELISA test for Antibodies, not Antigen

False positives can occur in kittens nursing infected or vaccinated queens. Retest at 60 day interval until 6 months old. Most positive kittens will revert.

False negatives are rare.

PCR - very sensitive test for viremia. FIV subtypes and sample contamination can lead to false negatives.

Testing Kittens for FeLv / FIV

If positive, retest every 30-60 days for 120 days

If negative retest every 30 days for 90 days.

Do both of these until two consecutive positive or negative tests occur.

When should you test?

ASK

A- At risk cats - test annually.

S- Sick cats, even if tested previously.

K- Kittens and all new cats of unknown status.

For sick cats

- Test all with serious illness
- Test all minor illnesses with:
 - gingivitis
 - fever
 - abscesses
 - failure to respond to appropriate therapy
 - repeat illnesses

What to do with Positives:

At home:

Quarantine to protect negative cats.

Discuss hygiene.

Vaccination of negative cats.

Don't allow fighting.

In the Clinic:

Low risk of transmission.

Disinfect very well. All 4 walls. Allow disinfectant time to work.

Wash hands between patients

Wash dental instruments, ET tubes, and Pulse OX clips.

Flag patients as Positive, on chart and kennel, and in computer.

Monitor for symptoms.

Need not be isolated if these are followed. These cats are at higher risk in Iso with sick animals.

Remember these animals are immunologically at risk.

No raw foods. Good nutrition.

Parasite check frequently.

Use regular parasite prevention. Endo and Ecto parasites.

Remember risk of Zoonosis for parasites.

Keep teeth and gums healthy. Antibiotics before and after dentals. Consider Pulse Therapy on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. Use Antirobe or Clavamox.

Oravet

Biotene for Oral excoriations

Viralys - L-Lysine

Spay or Neuter

See patients every 6 months or more. Blood work, check lymph nodes, and chart weight regularly.

Treat regular type illnesses longer than normal.

Avoid therapies that might suppress immune symptoms. Use steroids judiciously.

Educate staff, especially receptionists, about when and how to recommend testing.

Educate clients. Send home information, report cards and send reminders. Give them copies of labwork with lay-friendly explanations.

www.felinehealthchampion.com for staff education on dentistry and retrovirus disease.