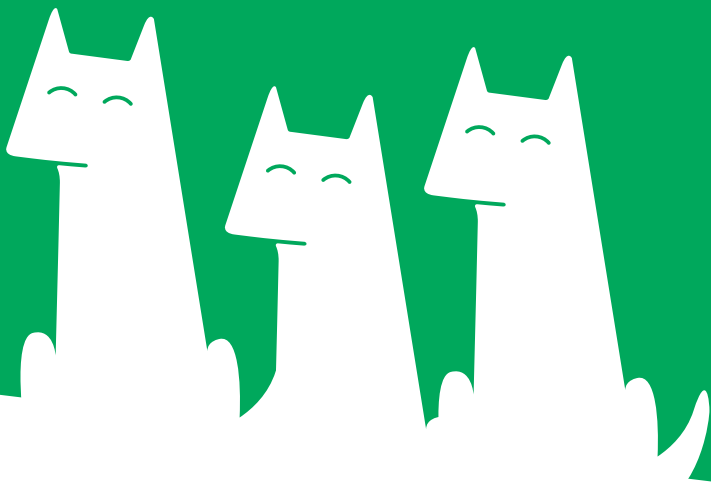


# Feline Parvovirus (FPV)



**CATS PROTECTION**  
**VETERINARY GUIDE 5**



## What is feline parvovirus?

Feline parvovirus is a virus that can cause severe disease in cats, particularly kittens. It can be fatal. The disease is also known as feline infectious enteritis (FIE) and feline panleukopenia.

The virus is extremely resilient and can survive in the environment for long periods of time. Sadly this disease has a very high mortality rate and, on occasion, outbreaks are still seen in some multi-cat situations such as households with unvaccinated cats, breeders or catteries. FPV does not affect humans or dogs but canine parvovirus can occasionally infect cats.

## How are cats infected with FPV?

FPV can survive in the environment for up to a year and a specialised disinfectant is required to kill it. Most cats contract FPV from a contaminated environment via infected faeces rather than from direct contact with infected cats.

The virus passes quickly through the cat and most cats will only shed FPV in their faeces for a couple of days, although shedding can occur for up to six weeks. However, the infection can be passed directly from cat to cat, particularly in environments where lots of cats are in direct contact with each other.

## Which cats are vulnerable to FPV?

Kittens are most susceptible, especially when the protective antibodies they receive in their mother's milk have waned at about four to 12 weeks of age. Unvaccinated adult cats are also susceptible to this disease and allowing booster vaccinations to lapse can be risky.

## What are the signs of FPV?

Not all cats infected with FPV show signs but if they do, they may include the following:

- vomiting, bringing up froth or being wet around the lips
- a variable temperature – usually raised in the early stages, and low later on
- hunger and thirst with an inability to eat or drink – affected cats often sit hunched over bowls
- watery diarrhoea with or without blood

Unfortunately, sometimes no obvious signs are present and a cat will die without apparent warning.

If a pregnant queen is infected with FPV, the brains of her unborn kittens may be damaged. When they are born they will have problems with their balance, resulting in a wobbly gait. At weaning they may have difficulty feeding as their heads will bob up and down. If you are a breeder and have repeated problems with 'fading kittens' it may suggest that your premises are infected with the virus.

## How is FPV diagnosed?

The vet may take blood and faecal samples from a sick cat and send them to a veterinary laboratory that will look for signs of the virus and antibodies. If the cat has already died, the vet can send samples of the intestines which can also be tested for the virus.

If you want to know if FPV is present on your premises but none of your cats are presently sick, they can be tested for high levels of antibodies against FPV.

## Do FPV carrier cats exist?

The virus passes quickly through the cat and most cats will only shed FPV in their faeces for a couple of days, although shedding can occur for up to six weeks and FPV can be detected in the faeces of apparently healthy cats.

## How is FPV treated?

There is no cure for FPV but if the disease is detected in time, the symptoms can be treated and some cats recover with intensive care including good nursing, fluid therapy and assisted feeding.

## How can FPV be prevented?

Vaccination is the main method of prevention. Primary vaccination courses usually start at eight or nine weeks of age with a second injection three to four weeks later. Adult cats should receive regular boosters. The FPV vaccine is usually combined with other disease vaccines, such as for the cat flu viruses.

Care must be taken when vaccinating pregnant queens against FPV as some vaccines may adversely affect unborn kittens. Good hygiene, isolation procedures and barrier nursing of infected cats is imperative to prevent spreading this disease to other susceptible cats.

For more information, see the Cats Protection [\*Veterinary Guide: Infectious disease and vaccination.\*](#)

## What should I do now that FPV has been diagnosed?

Any areas where infected cats have been and anywhere that the virus may have been spread – for example on the bottom of shoes – will potentially have high levels of the virus which may be infectious for many months. Disposable aprons, gloves, shoe covers and equipment would be recommended to prevent transmission of the virus to other areas.

It is important to reduce the contamination by removing any faecal matter and thoroughly disinfecting the area with a suitable veterinary disinfectant. Particular attention should be paid to litter trays, food/water bowls and bedding.

The virus can last for many months in the environment, so is it recommended that only cats that have been fully vaccinated are introduced to the area after an outbreak. Avoid introducing susceptible cats and kittens to the contaminated environment for at least a year.

### Learn more about your cat online!

Take a look at our free interactive tool to help you understand cats' origins and their behaviour within our homes. <http://learnonline.cats.org.uk/content/ufo>

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