



# Cats Protection's guidelines for the tuberculosis (TB) flow chart for vets

Cats are susceptible to several forms of mycobacterial infection some of which pose a zoonotic risk, with *M.bovis* being of particular concern. However all forms in cats require prolonged intensive treatment and generally carry a guarded prognosis. For this reason Cats Protection does not believe the treatment of cats in care with mycobacterial infection or the rehoming of cats suspected of having mycobacterial infection provides good welfare or is appropriate. Sadly, these cats should be euthanased.

The attached flow chart provides a rough outline of the steps necessary to diagnose or rule out mycobacterial infection, however this is a complicated and fast changing field and it is essential that you contact the Veterinary department for advice as soon as you have any concerns that you might be dealing with a mycobacterial infection. Mycobacterial infection can present with a wide range of clinical signs and it is important that it is something you bear in mind when examining cats, particularly those from a high risk region, fed a raw food diet or that have been in contact with a suspected/confirmed case. Hunting and having a primarily outdoor lifestyle can also be predisposing factors. Clinical signs to be aware of would be weight loss, a non-healing wound/abscess, a discharging sinus/mass or nodule, enlarged lymph nodes, chronic gastrointestinal (GIT) disease or severe respiratory disease. All skin masses should be sent for histology and ideally a portion frozen for culture.

It is important to remember that there is a potential zoonotic risk. For this reason we do not recommend bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) in cases with a high index of suspicion for mycobacterial infection as it is often not diagnostic and presents a high risk of spreading infection or transmitting infection to staff. Appropriate precautions such as gloves and face masks should also be taken when sampling or investigating ulcerated or discharging non-healing wounds or performing post mortems in cases felt to be of high risk.

A blood test is available, however this is an unvalidated blood test and a negative test result does not guarantee the absence of infection. The interferon gamma release assay (IGRA) blood test is run by Biobest. Currently it is only run every other Thursday and must be run on a fresh non-refrigerated sample of 2ml of heparinised blood. Please check with the Veterinary department before running the blood test and phone the lab for the most up to date information.



# Cats Protection's guidance to tuberculosis (TB) for cats in care

