

THIS JUST IN

FDA Warning About 5-FU Keep it away from pets

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has received reports of dogs and cats having serious reactions after being accidentally exposed to the topical drug 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), which is used to treat skin cancer, keratosis, and vitiligo in people. All the dogs died or were euthanized due to the severity of their condition. Cats also are especially vulnerable to poisoning by this medicine.

Pets can be exposed when they lick their owner's skin where the topical medication is applied or by chewing on tubes of 5-FU. Nearly all cases of pets being exposed to fluorouracil are accidental. The drug is marketed under the brand names Carac, Efudex, Fluoroplex, and Tolak, and the generic name Fluorouracil Cream USP, 5%.

Signs of fluorouracil poisoning in pets usually occur within 30 minutes of exposure and include vomiting, seizures, tremors, difficulty breathing, decreased activity level, and diarrhea. Death may occur without prompt treatment. To help with awareness, the FDA has asked manufacturers to place a warning on the medicine container.

The FDA will continue to monitor reports of reactions after exposure to topical fluorouracil products and asks that reactions in pets be reported to www.fda.gov/medwatch. ■

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When a Stray Chooses You

Cats living on their own sometimes decide it's time to adopt a human, especially if they're strays

Most cat lovers will tell you that cats often find you, whether you're looking for a cat or not. Some cats just seem to sense that there is a home with a person needing feline companionship. A small kitten or friendly cat may just let you catch them, or they may walk right on into your home. A skittish cat, however, may need a baited trap. Once you catch the cat, the job of ensuring that she's "available" begins.

Start by letting local shelters, rescue groups, and animal-control officers know about the cat. You might even consider putting up posters in case the cat is lost and not a homeless stray. Many feral-cat groups spay, neuter, and vaccinate their charges in colonies they supervise. The treated cats are often marked with a tattoo or ear clip. Most groups also keep records with photos, so you may quickly learn if the cat is a stray or simply lost.

The Quarantine Period

Any stray cat should undergo a quarantine period, especially if you have other animals, due to the possibility of disease. Most importantly, you want to avoid exposure to rabies for you, your family, and any other pets. Ten days is recommended as a rabies quarantine period. Quarantine also minimizes the risk of sharing other infectious diseases.

Stray and Feral Aren't the Same

Most animal-rescue groups distinguish between stray cats and feral cats, although both felines may be living outside and even in the same colony. Stray cats have been socialized to humans, usually through being a pet at some point in their lives. Most feral cats have been on their own all along. It may be hard to tell at first, because a stray cat can be as wary as a feral cat, at least initially.



It can be difficult to determine if a skittish cat is a stray or feral, but a stray will usually warm up to you if you're persistent.

During quarantine, you'll want to assess the newcomer's temperament and let your current pets, if you have any, adapt to the sight, smell, and sound of the new cat in the house.

The ideal setup is a separate room with a door you can close, but if that's not possible, a large dog crate with food and water bowls, a litterbox, and a box for the cat to hide in will work. If you do use a crate, it is important to prevent any nose-to-nose contact between the new cat and any current feline residents through its door, as some diseases, like feline leukemia, can be transmitted by this type of casual contact.

If you notice fleas, ticks, or mites, treat the cat before bringing her into your home. A bath followed by a topical treatment is best. Have the cat evaluated by a veterinarian promptly, especially if the cat is ill or becomes ill during the quarantine. At that visit, you should request a test for feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus

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New Diagnostic Guidelines for FIP

Definitive diagnosis remains challenging, but early diagnosis may promote improved outcomes

Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) is a common and often fatal disease in cats under 2 years of age. Caused by mutation of feline coronavirus (FCoV) in a small percentage of cats that are infected by this common and usually benign GI virus, it is distinct from human COVID-19 virus.

Cats infected with FIP initially develop nonspecific signs such as loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, and fever. In the “dry” form of the disease, affected cats often exhibit neurologic signs including seizures and ataxia (abnormal or uncoordinated movements). Those cats with the “wet” form of FIP accumulate fluid within body cavities, including the abdomen and the chest cavity. Affected cats may develop a pot-bellied appearance due to abdominal fluid accumulation, and if fluid accumulation is excessive, it may become difficult for an affected cat to breathe normally.

Unfortunately, these clinical signs can be seen in a variety of other diseases, making a definitive diagnosis of FIP challenging in many cases. Early diagnosis is important, though, because the best outcomes occur when treatment is started early in the FIP disease process.

To aid in a more rapid diagnosis, the American Association of Feline Practitioners, working in collaboration with the Every Cat Health Foundation, recently released new diagnostic guidelines for veterinarians.

Diagnosis still starts with a thorough physical examination and history of clinical signs and is supported by the results of basic and advanced imaging, bloodwork, antibody testing, culturing of fluid samples, and specific molecular biologic (genetic) testing to identify the causative virus in fluid, blood, and tissue samples.

The fact that many, if not most, cats have been exposed to FCoV, and that current tests cannot distinguish between the benign form of the virus and the FIP form, complicates diagnosis. Despite this, a presumptive diagnosis can be made by identifying a constellation of findings in many cases. Not surprisingly, for example, cats with FIP generally exhibit much higher antibody levels to coronavirus than healthy cats carrying the FCoV coronavirus.

Ongoing research focused on a more definitive diagnostic test, including the cutting-edge genetic screening work of Dr. Gary Whittaker at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine (funded, in part, by the Cornell Feline Health Center) holds promise of dramatically improving our ability to diagnose this dreadful feline disease.

Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery (2022) 24, 905–933, DOI: 10.1177/1098612X221118761

What to Know About Aging in Cats

Most veterinarians agree cats are considered senior at age 10

Just as in humans, as your cat ages, so does the likelihood of an age-related disease rearing its ugly head. Cats are considered seniors at 10 years of age. Weakened immune systems, kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, thinner skin, brittle nails, and arthritis are among the changes and diseases that can be seen in senior cats.

Never assume that changes you see in an older cat are benign, as it is always best to catch diseases early.

Contact your veterinarian about your cat if you see any of these symptoms or signs of possible illness:

- ▶ Diarrhea that lasts more than two days
- ▶ Increased thirst and/or urination
- ▶ Vomiting that lasts for more than one day
- ▶ Increased respiratory rate/effort
- ▶ Blood in urine or stool
- ▶ Changes in activity level
- ▶ Hiding in unusual places
- ▶ Appetite changes
- ▶ Unkempt appearance
- ▶ Unsteady gait
- ▶ Weakness/collapse
- ▶ Weight loss
- ▶ Greenish/yellowish discharge from the nose or the eyes
- ▶ Inability to urinate or painful urination (straining)

Cornell CatWatch

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CatWatch is an independent newsletter
produced in collaboration with
Cornell University College of Veterinary
Medicine's Feline Health Center



College of
Veterinary Medicine

For information on pet health, visit the Cornell
University College of Veterinary Medicine,
website at vet.cornell.edu

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Subscriptions: \$39 per year (U.S.) • \$49 per
year (Canada). For subscription and customer
service information, visit
www.catwatchnewsletter.com/cs
or write to: CatWatch, P.O. Box 8535,
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535. 800-829-5574



CatWatch® (ISSN: 1098-2639) is
published monthly for \$39 per
year by Belvoir Media Group, LLC,
535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk,
CT 06854-1713. Robert Englander,
Chairman and CEO; Timothy H.
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(FIV). A fecal sample to rule out internal parasites is also important. Vaccinations can be given to a healthy stray after quarantine. Your veterinarian also can scan the cat for a microchip that might indicate a lost cat.

Vaccinations will be given with the assumption that the cat has not been previously vaccinated. Microchip the cat so she won't be lost again. Schedule a spay/neuter if needed (a spayed female will have a scar).

Emotional Assessment

Your new family member may have some emotional scars or behavioral baggage. Cats can become strays for a variety of reasons. Someone may have dumped the cat out near your home. People often assume that rural families don't mind adding another cat to their barn cat or pet population. The cat may have escaped during a trip or a move. Some cats are dropped off due to aggression or house soiling. It may take some time for those behavior problems to become evident.

Make introductions to any current pets slowly. Rubbing towels on the new pet as well as the established pets and putting those towels on the other side of a barrier allows the animals involved to become familiar with the new scents. Consider using some feline pheromone sprays or diffusers such as Feliway.

Encounters across a tall baby gate can be a non-threatening way to become acquainted. If you have a rarely used room, that is best for face-to-face meetings as it will be "neutral" territory. All pets should be on leashes, and you need a couple of thick towels handy in case you need to intervene. Never put your hands between two fighting cats, as you may be injured.

Once you feel the cats involved are compatible, be sure you have enough food, water bowls, and litterboxes. The standard recommendation for litterboxes is the number of cats you have plus one. Each cat should have their own food and water bowl. Food bowls can be limited to the number of cats you have if you feed meals. Watch for bullying or aggression from any cat.

If you can't integrate a stray into your household, contact local shelters and rescues. If possible, offer to keep fostering the cat while putting up her photo and bio to encourage an adopter. The cat is likely better off with you, even temporarily. Consider it an honor that a stray cat chose you. ■

Sprite's Story: She Found the Right Home

A kitten herself, this calico beauty couldn't take care of her newborns

Fifteen years ago, on a beautiful March morning in Florida, I spied a calico cat lounging on my front porch. She was extremely thin and looked like she had kittens, but they were nowhere to be seen. I checked around and learned that one of the neighbors had been feeding her on and off for at least four months. The next time the calico appeared, I went over, lifted the cat into a carrier, and brought her home.

This beautiful cat feasted, slept, and purred, totally content to be in a home. I named her Sprite, because she was as thin and delicate as a fairy. We were happy.

Around the same time, another neighbor and his wife found what appeared to be orphaned kittens and was planning to take them to the shelter in the morning. I told him I would love to see the kittens. He arrived at my house and put the box on the floor. Out spilled four tiny kittens, mewling at the top of their lungs. Sprite came running to see them, laid down and attempted to nurse them. Of course, she was dry. We purchased cans of kitten milk and poured it onto a dinner plate. The kittens drank it as fast as they could. I decided to keep the family together.

I took Sprite and her kittens to the veterinarian to be sure they were healthy.

The vet estimated

Sprite to be about 8 months old and the kittens about 3 weeks old. Sprite had likely abandoned the kittens because she was not making enough milk. Although the kittens were cold and wet, they were healthy. Only a few hours after the family was reunited, Sprite's milk returned, and she was able to nurse.

The next morning, Mike called to say they heard another kitten yelling but couldn't get it to come to him. I put one of the rescued kittens in a carrier and took it to the spot Mike heard the kitten. When the left-behind kitten yelled, his sister in the crate responded, and he came to her. Within minutes, Sprite's whole family was reunited.

Two weeks later, I heard a banshee-like scream coming from the bedroom. I ran in to find Sprite attacking the largest male kitten. I put him and his brother in another bedroom and only allowed them to be with their mother to nurse. That night, as soon as I turned off the lights, Sprite stood at the window and wailed. She was in heat. To keep her quiet, I slept with the lights on. The next day she went after the female kittens and had to be separated from all of them. Fortunately, I found homes for all the kittens. Sprite, of course, stayed with me.

Sprite has had a lot of adventures over the years. She underwent extensive surgery after a neighbor's dog bit her in the face, crushing her jaw and cheekbones. Twice, she protested new additions to our household by moving out and taking up residence on the roof for a few weeks.

Now, as the matriarch, she lives in my office, where she walks across my keyboard to let me know when she's hungry and makes sure her tail appears at least once in every Zoom meeting. At a healthy 12 pounds, she's no longer a delicate fairy, but she's in the home where she knows she belongs. – H.S.



Sprite and her kittens.

Photocourtesy of Holly Strawnbridge

Holiday Household Hazards

Cats can get into trouble at any time, but this season offers an abundance of opportunities

We all want our cats to live the happiest and healthiest lives possible. Part of this means we need to be aware of household hazards that can get our kitties into trouble, and there are a lot of them.

During the holidays, all kinds of new foods, plants, and decorations that attract feline interest are brought into the house. You'll need to be on your toes. Gift wrapping presents a cat with an especially irresistible challenge: Wait till the person turns around to get a gift tag, then grab some ribbon and run as fast as you can!

In addition to ribbons, the hustle and bustle of the holidays brings some added dangers for our kitties, including chocolate, candles with open flames, and sweets that might contain the artificial sweetener xylitol.

Poisonous Plants

Many common houseplants are toxic to cats. Effects can range from mild vomiting to kidney failure and death depending on the plant.

Most cat lovers know that lilies and poinsettias are toxic to cats, but there are many other toxic plant species that may arrive in a holiday flower arrangement, including mistletoe, holly, amaryllis, baby's breath, carnations, geraniums, mint, and tulips.

Keeping toxic plants out of your cat's reach can be challenging. High places and windowsills sometimes work, but not if a cat is determined. The best way to prevent your cat from chewing on a toxic plant is to keep it in a room that your cat does not have access to.

Household Maintenance Products

Holidays and cleaning go hand-in-hand in most households. Cats are less likely to intentionally consume many cleaning products and other substances than dogs, but they do have a knack for walking through spills. Your cat can then ingest anything that she stepped into as she grooms herself.

While there are plenty of worrisome products out there, be especially careful with antifreeze, bleach, cleaning products, moth balls, rodenticides, and



Ribbons are irresistible, but dangerous, to a cat.

toilet-bowl cleaners. Store all products in areas that your cat cannot access, and clean up spills immediately.

Kitchen Nightmares

Of course, the holidays are a prime time for new dishes and treats. Watch out for grapes, raisins, coffee grounds, tea, cooked/baked bones, and avocados. The safest thing for you to do is to ensure that your cat does not have access to any human foods. We know it's the holidays, so if you share a little meat as a special treat, remove it from the bone first, and avoid giving large amounts of fat to your cat or overfeeding her in general.

The aroma of your cooking may lure your cat onto a hot stovetop, resulting in burns to her paw pads and nose. A particularly curious cat could also get burned trying to taste-test from an unattended pan.

Ideally, you should teach your cat that she is not allowed on the kitchen counter by immediately picking her up and moving her. Try to prevent her from accessing it at all when you can't supervise by closing a door or setting up barriers to block the counter. Make sure that food is always put away after meals so that your cat isn't tempted up onto the counter to sneak a snack. Keeping her off of the counter will also prevent her from contaminating your food with organisms

that can cause zoonotic disease, including toxoplasma and salmonella.

If your cat does have kitchen privileges, always keep an eye on her as you cook, and don't leave hot pans or stovetops unattended. She will definitely leap first and ask questions later.

Personal Items

Cats love to play with tiny items and string-like objects. Some of their stolen "treasures" also pose a choking hazard or can cause a gastrointestinal obstruction. Be especially careful to keep the cat away from dental floss, hair ties, Christmas tree tinsel, rubber bands, ribbons, bows, string, tacks, and twist ties.

Many essential oils are toxic to cats if they are ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin. Check lotions, diffusers, and other personal products for essential oils that may harm your cat and store or discard them accordingly.

Other Dangers

Walk through your house and consider other ways that your cat might accidentally hurt herself or get into something she shouldn't. Don't stack gifts and expect her to not check out the new high perch. If the gifts are stacked, they need to be stable.

Also think about hidey-holes where your cat might like to hide, such as the washing machine or dryer. Try not to leave these appliances open, and always check to make sure that your cat isn't inside before starting a cycle.

Remember that many medications that are safe for humans and/or dogs are extremely dangerous for cats. Top culprits include: acetaminophen (Tylenol), antidepressants, ibuprofen and other pain relievers, permethrins (often found in dog flea and tick medications), and even some vitamins. If you think your cat may have swallowed a pill or come into contact with your dog's topical flea preventive, call a poison control service immediately. Having the medication vial/container available during this call is ideal.

While it may seem like there are a lot of household hazards out there, almost all of them are easy to avoid with a periodic check of things.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center has an extensive list of plants, foods, and other household items that are toxic to cats. You can find their website at aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control. ■

What's That Racket?!

Your defense is simple: A tired cat is a quiet cat

During the day, your cat lazily strolls from one napping spot to the next. But as soon as the sun goes down, he turns into a rowdy meowing, pouncing, running maniac!

Most of the time, this is normal. “Cats are crepuscular—most active at dawn and dusk,” says Pamela J. Perry, DVM, PhD, behavior resident at Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “This also means that they tend to sleep most of the day, so they are more energetic in the wee hours.”

Twilight Hunters

Cats take advantage of the limited light during dusk and dawn to hunt their prey. It is difficult for prey to spot them creeping up, but the cats can see just fine.

Most of our domestic cats no longer need to hunt for their living, but those instincts run deep. As the sun goes down and then starts to rise again, your cat feels that ancestral call to action and starts making up his own games. Some cats dart through the house at high speed, making a shocking amount of noise for such a small and graceful creature. Others initiate dramatic games of batting and pouncing with “prey” such as bottle caps, pens, or twist ties.

Some cats pair their activity with delighted meows and chirps as they play. Your cat may even enlist you to join in the fun, which is cute if you’re staying up watching a movie, not so much at 3 a.m.

Fun on Your Schedule

You can enjoy playtime with your cat and get your sleep too. “Engaging your cat in play and other activities in the evening will give him an outlet for his instinctual behavior and tire him out before bedtime,” says Dr. Perry.

Entice your cat with feather toys or rolling balls to get him moving and playing. Try to keep him engaged until he starts to tire. Experiment with different cat toys and games to see what he likes best and mix it up to keep him interested.

Training games can be a fun way to interact with your cat and use up some of his energy. Many cats love learning tricks and become avid clicker training fans. For added fun, when giving your cat a food reward, toss it so he can chase and pounce on the treat.

Enforce that when playtime is over, playtime is over. “Many cats learn that when they wake their owners during the night, they get attention and/or food, which makes them more likely to wake their owners again,” says Dr. Perry. “Thus, it is important to avoid giving in to the cat’s demands.” This, of course, is easier said than done.

Wearing your cat out before bedtime is the first step, but is not always 100% effective. Try to ignore your cat when he bothers you at night, or shut him out of the bedroom. Setting up a kitty condo or a large dog crate with everything your cat needs overnight is a great option to confine a cat who gets destructive when ignored. He will be safe and secure in his condo, and your furniture and face will be safe from poking paws.

Hungry, Hungry Kittens

Some cats make a racket in the wee hours of the morning as a bid for early breakfast. In addition to meowing, your cat might also jump on you as you sleep or even lick, nip, or scratch at you to force you to get out of bed.

“If the cat is waking the owner for food, the owner can use an automatic feeder with a timer to dispense food at the forbidden hour,” says Dr. Perry. Using an automatic feeder helps in two ways: First, your cat gets a snack at the time he

wants it. Second, it redirects your cat’s attention to the automatic feeder instead of needing your help.

A variety of automatic feeders are available on the market, so shop around to choose the one that best fits your needs. Larger feeders won’t need to be refilled as often, but there is a risk that food can spoil depending on the design. Very few feeders keep canned food moist. If you have a particularly devious cat, make sure that he can’t open or knock over the feeder to get extra snacks.

Also remember to factor any midnight snacks into your cat’s daily caloric intake. Depending on your desired feeding schedule, you might choose to feed his breakfast early via the automatic feeder, or to split his breakfast into two meals, one served via robot in the middle of the night, the other served when you get up in the morning.

Health Concerns

While nighttime activity and vocalization is usually a normal feline behavior, changes in your cat’s sleeping schedule or activity patterns may indicate a health problem. “Some cats become more vocal at night as they age, which can be due to medical issues or sensory or cognitive decline,” says Dr. Perry. If your aging cat is suddenly pacing through the house at night crying, or if he has deviated from his usual routines, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to discuss the behavioral changes and check for any underlying health problems such as hyperthyroidism. ■



You can slow down your cat’s night prowls, if you take the time to play during the day.

Skin Folds in Obese Cats

Infection can set in before you even realize it

As well as wreaking havoc on the inside of your cat's body, excess weight can cause problems on the outside of your cat. Feline skin is meant to lie flat along a sleek body and to be groomed regularly to remove debris and disperse normal skin secretions. When "slightly pudgy" turns to "hefty chonker," skin folds can form and become a site of infections.

Perfect Recipe

Your cat's skin has a variety of glands that secrete oils and other substances that lubricate and moisturize the skin and coat. When your cat grooms himself, his tongue spreads the oils around and removes any excess. For most cats, you will never notice these skin secretions.

Buildup is when problems can occur. Obese cats often struggle to reach all parts of their body during grooming because they are less flexible. If the cat also has a health issue such as diabetes, he may neglect his grooming habits simply because he doesn't feel good. The skin will continue to secrete as usual, leaving an oily coating to build up on the hair coat and in skin folds.

"As the sebum and apocrine sweat accumulate in the folds, bacteria, yeast, or both join the party and cause inflammation and odor," says William H. Miller Jr., VMD, board-certified dermatologist and professor emeritus of medicine at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

What to Watch For

Skin fold infections are easy to spot if you know what to look for. Dr. Miller says that cats often try to lick the area because the inflammation is uncomfortable. The skin will be red and inflamed, and there will likely be visible buildup of oily debris. Severe infections may be accompanied by sores.

Many cats will still lick themselves even if they can't reach the area with the problem, so check your cat's entire body if you notice him licking one spot excessively but that skin appears healthy.

Odor is another sign of a problem. "If the cat sits on the owner's lap, the owner should be concerned for the cat's personal hygiene—bad body odor!" says Dr. Miller. Yeast infections can smell kind

of like bread dough or corn chips, but any strong or abnormal odor coming from your cat is cause for concern.

Weight Loss and Skin Care

"The obvious answer to the problem is weight reduction," says Dr. Miller. "If that's not going to happen, the answer is frequent cleaning of the folded area. If the bacterial or yeast overgrowth has already set in, medicated cleaning pads are indicated."

Once you suspect that your cat has a skin infection, he will need to visit your veterinarian. The veterinarian will likely take a swab of the area and look at it under a microscope to see if bacteria or yeast are present. He or she may then recommend or dispense a medicated wipe that you can use to soothe the skin and defeat the microscopic invaders.

For chronic infections that don't respond to treatment, your veterinarian may send out a sample for a culture and sensitivity test to identify the exact pathogen(s) causing the infection and which medications will kill them. Topical treatments are preferred, but some severe infections may require systemic medications that are given by mouth (thankfully, this is rare).

Continuing Care

As long as your cat continues to be overweight and to have skin folds, he will be at risk for these infections. Dr. Miller recommends using a basic diaper wipe for daily cleaning of all skin folds once the infection has been resolved.

"If the cat won't lose weight and the owner can't or won't clean the

folds, it's time to visit a surgeon," says Dr. Miller. Surgery can be performed to remove the skin fold. This is obviously an extreme solution to the problem, so treating and preventing skin fold infections with medications and good hygiene are preferred.

If your cat isn't crazy about being held and handled, make daily wiping sessions a positive experience by allowing him a tiny amount of a tasty treat. Also see if lifting him up onto a table or chair is more agreeable to him than holding him in your lap.

Prevention

Ideally, you can prevent skin fold infections by not allowing your cat to become overweight in the first place. But if you do find yourself in possession of an obese cat, start by talking to your veterinarian about a safe, gradual weight loss program and figuring out an optimal feeding routine for him.

Monitor your cat's skin and coat to be sure that he is grooming normally. If you notice greasy buildup on the hair, introduce short sessions of brushing each day. Check his whole body—don't forget the belly and between the hind legs—for skin folds where bacteria or yeast might decide to set up shop. If your cat has skin folds, wipe them regularly with a plain, unscented diaper wipe to keep the skin healthy until your cat is able to groom that area on his own again. ■



If your cat is obese and clearly not grooming himself, do a thorough check of his skin regularly.

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Managing Inflammatory Bowel Disease in Cats

Treatment includes dietary protein adjustments

Q I am writing to you about my 6-year-old cat Ellie, who was presumptively diagnosed with IBD about 6 months ago after an ultrasound was performed. I am now feeding her Hills Z/D diet. Typically, how long does a flare-up last? Is there something I can do to help her in the midst of these flare ups? I would appreciate any tips/tricks to assist my little girl in her struggle.

A Thanks for getting in touch, and I am very sorry to hear of Ellie's problem. Unfortunately, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a common problem in cats, and perhaps a brief review of this disease and its management in cats would be helpful.

IBD refers to inflammation of portions of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract that occurs for reasons that are not clear, but that is believed to involve an interaction between the diet, the immune system (like an allergic response in the GI tract), and bacterial populations in the GI tract. Genetic influences may play a role in cats, as they do in some people with IBD.

The definitive diagnosis of IBD, and the distinction between IBD and the other most common cause of chronic GI disease in cats, GI lymphoma (a form of cancer), requires biopsies of the GI tract that are obtained either via endoscopy or surgery. Both procedures require the use of general anesthesia.

Given the potential risks associated with general anesthesia, it is not uncommon, nor unreasonable in most cases, to treat presumptively for IBD while

monitoring response prior to considering pursuit of GI biopsies.

A major component of the treatment of IBD involves dietary management, with which diets that do not contain usual proteins that can stimulate an immune response in the GI tract are fed.

These diets may either contain protein sources that a cat has never been fed before or contain proteins that have been partially digested (hydrolyzed) into smaller-than-usual pieces so that they are no longer recognized by the immune system as being "foreign."

It may take several weeks to months, in some cases, for cats with IBD to respond to these diets. If a hypoallergenic diet does not work, a low fat, high fiber, highly digestible diet may be tried. The Z/D diet that you are currently feeding



Don't let that sweet face convince you otherwise, diet is a major part of managing IBD.

Signs of Inflammatory Bowel Disease

- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Weight loss
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Bloody stools
- ▶ Lethargy
- ▶ Decreased appetite

These signs can vary in severity and frequency, and the predominant signs depend on which parts of the GI tract are affected. For example, if the stomach or higher areas of the small intestine are inflamed, the cat may experience chronic vomiting. Inflammation in the colon, in contrast, is more likely to cause diarrhea, with or without blood in the stool.

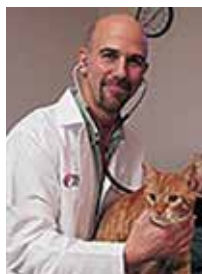
is a hydrolyzed diet, which I believe is a good choice in this case.

In addition to dietary modification, some cats require medications to decrease inflammation in their GI tracts, and drugs such as metronidazole, corticosteroids, and, in rare cases, stronger immunosuppressive drugs like chlorambucil or azathioprine may be prescribed.

Prebiotics and probiotics may be prescribed to promote beneficial GI flora, and the addition of soluble fiber and supplementation with B vitamins, which may not be absorbed from the diet well in cases of IBD, may be recommended.

IBD may recur in affected cats, and it is common for treatment to involve combinations of therapies to successfully control flare-ups.

I hope that this is helpful, and that Ellie is doing well. Please send us an update when you can. ■



Do You Have a Health Concern?

Send your health questions to Bruce Kornreich, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, Director of the Cornell Feline Health Center and Editor-in-Chief of CatWatch. Email to catwatcheditor@cornell.edu or send by regular mail to CatWatch, 535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1713.



Scan this code for more information on the Cornell Feline Health Center.

Coming Up ...

- ▶ Identification for Indoor Cats
- ▶ What to Do If You Suspect Poison
- ▶ Battling Early-Stage Chronic Kidney Disease
- ▶ Monitoring Meds: Why Bring a Cat Into the Office for a Prescription Refill?
- ▶ How to Make Advanced Imaging Decisions