
FIV FAQ

What is FIV?

FIV is feline immunodeficiency virus. It's a virus that lives in the blood and saliva of cats.

Is FIV contagious to humans?

No. This virus can only survive inside of the feline body.

Is it contagious to any animals?

Yes, it is contagious to felines only. It is not contagious to dogs or other species.

How do cats get FIV?

FIV is feline immunodeficiency virus. It's a virus that lives in the blood and saliva of cats.

Do FIV cats need medication?

It can only be spread through sex and deep penetrating bite wounds. It is not spread by grooming, eating together, sharing a litter box, etc.

What, if anything, does FIV do to a cat?

It can cause a weakened immune system, similar to HIV but much less severe. Most FIV cats live long normal healthy lives; statistically there is no difference in lifespan. Sometimes they can get gingivitis, and if they do get sick they may get sicker faster than a negative cat. So catching illnesses early in an FIV cat is important as well as taking them in for annual check ups. But lots of people own FIV+ cats and don't even know it because they never got them tested. FIV was discovered in 1986. If you owned cats prior to 1986, they may have had an FIV+ cat and you never knew it!

Will FIV live in my house or carpet?

No. The FIV virus dies very rapidly in the environment. You don't have to worry about carrying it on your clothes. You can safely house FIV negative cats in the same place you previously housed FIV positive cats, and can even house non-aggressive, altered positive and negative cats together, without significant risk of transmission.

Will FIV get my personal cats sick?

Since FIV is only spread through deep bite wounds or sex, the standard answer is "no". All APA cats are spayed/neutered so there is no risk of spreading through sex (even if cats "mount" each other for dominance reasons they will not actually penetrate). Most cats, if they don't get along, don't actually bite each other hard enough to draw blood and spread FIV – typically they hiss, scratch, or maybe give warning bites, but it is very rare for neutered house cats to bite like that. If your personal cat and your newly adopted FIV cat are fighting that severely, FIV isn't your biggest concern! We house our FIV+ cats with FIV- cats, so long as they get along, and have never had FIV transmission. If we have an FIV+ cat we know does not get along with other cats we will let you know prior to adoption.