

Infectious Disease Guide:

CATS

FeLV, or Feline Leukemia Virus: one of the most common infectious diseases in cats, affecting 2-3% of the US cat population.

Symptoms: loss of appetite, weight loss, poor coat condition, fever, enlarged lymph nodes, pale gums and mucus membranes, infections (skin/GI/urinary/respiratory), persistent diarrhea, seizures, eye issues

Transmission: Infected cats can shed FELV via saliva, nasal secretions, urine, feces, and lactating mothers can pass it to kittens via milk. Other animals can be infected by co-grooming, bite wounds, and very rarely through shared litterboxes, food/water bowls, toys, etc

Lifecycle: cannot survive more than a few hours outside of the body (yay!)

Who is at risk: cats or kittens exposed to infected cats are at the greatest risk, via prolonged close contact or through bite wounds; kittens born to infected mothers, indoor/outdoor cats who might be bitten by an infected cat. Kittens are most susceptible to felv than adult cats; however, even healthy adult cats can become infected if sufficiently exposed.

How to control/clean:

- Soak exposed hard items (bowls, toys, litterboxes) with ACCEL or a water/bleach solution (10:1), and allow to soak for 10-15 minutes.
- Wipe
- Vacuum and mop
- Launder blankets/towels/linens

Prevention:

- Vaccinate your pets!
- Wash your hands after handling foster animals (or any unknown animal for that matter)
- Closely monitor foster animals for signs/ symptoms and let us know if you see something suspicious

Panleukopenia/ “feline distemper”/ parvo: so many names for one deadly virus—not to be confused with canine distemper or parvo—which are in the same family, but a different virus. Panleuk infects and kills cells in bone marrow, intestines, and developing fetuses in mother cats. Panleuk is deadly, so unfortunately if a shelter cat or kitten is found to be positive, they are most likely to be euthanized.

Symptoms:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Dehydration
- Lethargy
- Sudden death

Transmission: Cats can shed the virus in urine, feces, nasal secretions, and even fleas from infected cats can spread the virus. However, kind of like the common cold virus in people, since most cats are exposed at some point or another in small amounts, they can build up natural immunities.

Lifecycle: An infected cat tends to shed the virus for 1-2 days, but the virus can live in the environment for up to a year—so cats and kittens can become infected without ever coming into contact with an infected animal.

Who is at risk: Because the virus is everywhere in the environment, most cats and kittens are exposed to it at some point in their lives; however, young kittens, sick cats, and unvaccinated cats are the most susceptible. It is most common in kittens aged 3-5 months. Cats and kittens from unvaccinated feral colonies are at the highest risk of infection.

How to control/clean:

- Soak all hard items with ACCEL for 15 minutes—throw away plastic litterboxes, toys, bowls, etc.

Prevention:

- VACCINATE!! And don't forget your boosters!
- Panleuk is difficult to kill, so cats or kittens who are unvaccinated should not come into contact with exposed areas or items even after they have been disinfected.
- Quarantine foster animals, particularly kittens!
- Wash your hands/clothes/supplies
- Let us know if you see any signs or symptoms ASAP!

DOGS

Parvo Virus—highly infectious virus that affects canines. The most common form is intestinal, the less common form affects the heart muscles. Parvo affects the body's ability to absorb nutrients

Symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (often bloody)
- Lethargy
- Anorexia
- Weight-loss
- Low body temperature
- Dehydration
- Abdominal pain

Transmission: spread by direct contact with an infected dog, or indirectly by vomit or feces (not just orally, a dog can inhale the virus by sniffing feces as well). Objects that have come into contact with an infected animal, feces, or soil (shoes) can also carry the virus. Fomites are a big deal with this one!

Lifecycle: Parvo virus can live up to a year in ground soil

Who is at risk: unvaccinated dogs and puppies (particularly under 4 months) are at the highest risk; however, for unknown reasons, certain breeds are also more vulnerable to parvo than others (rottweilers, Dobermans, pit bulls, labs, German shepherds, English springers, and Alaskan sled dogs)

How to control/clean:

- Accel or bleach solution— soak items for 15 minutes

Prevention:

- Vaccinate!!! Keep up with boosters, if your dog is an "at-risk breed" talk to your vet about additional boosters or vaccines.

Ringworm: fungal infection that can affect hair, skin, nails of dogs/cats/humans. Causes ring-like lesions, but are not always obvious. Contagious to other animals and humans.

Symptoms: skin lesions, hair-loss, scaly skin at the center of a lesion, small pustules, lesions will grow in size over time, most common on the head, ears, tail—lesions aren't always circular. Excessive shedding and hair balls may occur, scratching is common. However, some animals can shed ringworm without ever showing symptoms.

Transmission: spores on an infected animal or in the environment (fomites); loves warm humid environments and can be found on brushes, bedding, furniture, and anything the animal has touched. Spores can also be wafted through the air, so wherever there is shedding and dust, there might be spores.

Lifecycle: can remain in the environment for up to 2 years—YIKES!

Who is at risk: Most healthy adult cats have a natural resistance to ringworm and may never develop symptoms. Young cats or kittens are at most risk; adult cats with immune issues, overuse of steroids, senior cats, free-roaming cats, malnourished or stressed cats are also at increased risk; genetics are also a factor as Persian cats appear to be more susceptible.

How to control/clean: Vacuuming, damp or steam mopping, and Swiffer-type mops are recommended. Carpets should be steam-cleaned.

- Soak items in ACCEL (accelerated hydrogen peroxide), then dust/mop/ vacuum. I know it sounds counterproductive, but you want to kill the spores, then vacuum/remove them from the environment.
- Laundry: temperature doesn't matter, you don't HAVE to use bleach, but don't overload the washer—the more agitation—the better. Wash items twice to be fully sanitized.

How to prevent infection:

- WASH YOUR HANDS!!!
- Wear gloves and protective gear when handling positive animals
- Humans with suppressed immune systems should be especially careful
- Quarantine foster animals

COMMON PARASITES:

Coccidia— single-celled parasite that lives in intestines. While some cases can be mild, if an animal is immunosuppressed or suffering from other viruses, coccidia can be fatal.

Symptoms: diarrhea (often with bloody mucus), lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite, dehydration

Transmission: ingestion of fecal matter or contaminated soil. Coccidia is not transferable between species i.e. your dog cannot give your cat coccidia, coccidia in animals is NOT transferable to humans.

How to control/clean/prevent: Pick up pet waste from your yard regularly. Provide clean/fresh water and food every day. Use flea/tick/parasite preventatives (Advantage, Revolution, etc). To clean your

home if an animal has coccidian, you should use steam cleaners, immerse contaminated items (bowls, toys, etc) in boiling water, or use an ammonia solution (10% ammonia)

Giardia— single-celled organism which infects cats and dogs

Symptoms: diarrhea

Transmission: ingestion of fecal matter via contaminated water, or other substances. While humans CAN get giardia, it is very rare for a human to contract it from a cat or dog—most cases of human giardia are passed from other humans.

How to control/clean/prevent: clean-up animal waste from your yard, use plastic bags or gloves,

Tapeworms— Long, flat, white worms (often broken into small segments)

Symptoms: small segments will be visible in feces

Transmission: fleas, mice, other rodents. The types of tapeworms that CAN be transmitted from animals to humans are very rare in the USA; people are very rarely affected by tapeworms

How to control/clean/prevent: Be sure your pets are up-to-date on flea/tick/parasite preventative

Roundworms— the most common parasite found in dogs, long white/brownish worms

Symptoms: usually adult animals will not show symptoms, but the worms may appear in the vomit or feces. Puppies or sick/stressed animals may exhibit vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, dull hair, pot-belly

Transmission: Animals can get roundworms in various ways, most commonly: feces, eating wild animals, soil contaminated by roundworm larvae. Roundworms CAN be transmitted to humans by ingestion of feces—so wash your hands!!!

How to control/clean/prevent: Keep your yard clean, be sure your pets can't get hold of dead animals (rats, mice, squirrels) as they may carry roundworms in their tissue. ALWAYS wash your hands after cleaning up feces

SOURCES:

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