

Risks, Health Complications, and Quality of Life for Cats with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

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Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) is endemic in cat populations at relatively low levels. In April, 2017, the news media in Nanaimo presented the virus as “contagious”, “incurable” and “deadly” (CTV News Vancouver Island, 2017). However, FIV is spread mainly through deep bite wounds and cats that are FIV positive can live as long as cats without it. The purpose of this study was to determine how the quality of life for cats who are affected by a diagnosis with FIV changes. The research was carried out using an online survey directed to owners of cats with FIV (n=507) and a questionnaire directed to veterinarians in Nanaimo and Parksville (n=5). The average age that the cats in the online survey lived to was 10.9 years old (n=126) and the primary cause of death was cancer in 24.5% of cats. While 27.5% of online survey participants reported oral infections and 20.7% of online survey participants reported respiratory illnesses, 29.7% reported no health complications after the time of diagnosis. The care of an FIV positive cat is manageable and may not even require any additional provisions than that of an FIV negative cat. However, in order to reduce the potential risk of health complications associated with FIV, extra preventative measures may be recommended.