



# Barta Animal Hospital



Pet Talk **SUMMER** 2015

## FIV and FeLV

**F**eline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV) are often confused. Although both are retroviruses with similar symptoms, they are different diseases. Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) is somewhat similar to HIV in humans. FIV is not typically fatal for cats; they can live relatively healthy lives with the disease for many years, although they are carriers and can infect healthy cats. FeLV-positive cats, on the other hand, typically die within three years of being infected.

should be spayed or neutered and kept indoors to prevent spreading the virus and to reduce exposing their weakened immune systems to other diseases.

Treatment focuses on supporting the immune system to ease the virus's secondary effects. The good news is that many cats with FIV live normal or near-normal life spans if they receive good care.

### FeLV

Cats in the early stage of FeLV may be asymptomatic; however, its health will eventually deteriorate, often resulting in leukemia. Sadly, there is no cure.

The FeLV virus is passed in bodily fluids such as saliva, mucous, urine, feces and blood. FeLV is commonly transmitted through mutual grooming, bites and scratches. It can also be transmitted through an infected mother cat, or when cats share litter boxes, food and water.

Keep your cat safe by preventing exposure to the virus. Healthy cats over three months old that are vaccinated for FeLV are unlikely to contract the virus. Simply keeping your cat inside also greatly limits its risk of infection.

Learn the symptoms of FIV and FeLV and ask us how we can help protect your cat.

### Symptoms of FIV and FeLV

- Fever
- Weight loss
- Reduced appetite
- Unkempt coat
- Abscesses
- Diarrhea
- Pale or inflamed gums
- Dental disease
- Skin redness or hair loss
- Wounds that won't heal
- Sneezing or runny nose
- Frequent urination, straining or urinating outside of litter box
- Bladder infections
- Upper respiratory infections
- Conjunctivitis or other eye problems
- Behavior changes
- Lethargy

### FIV

Cats with FIV may not show symptoms for years after infection. Once the disease takes hold, however, a severely weakened immune system leaves them vulnerable to other infections. FIV is frequently transmitted through bite wounds or passed from an infected mother to her kittens. Cats under one-year-old and any cats allowed outdoors run the greatest risk of infection.

If your cat has been exposed to an FIV-infected cat or to

any unknown cat, have them tested. Cats diagnosed with FIV



## Periodontal Disease and Your Pet

**U**nfortunately, periodontal disease (gum disease) is common in dogs and cats. Left untreated, it can lead to chronic pain, eroded gums, tooth loss, and bone loss. You may not notice signs of gum disease until the disease is advanced. Look for:

- Bad breath
- Difficulty chewing food or chewing only on one side of the mouth
- Blood in drinking water or on chew toys
- Bleeding or red gums
- Loose teeth
- Bloody saliva
- Sensitivity to touch in the facial area

What causes gum disease? Bacteria joins with saliva and other elements to form plaque. An infection is caused by the build-up of dental plaque around the gums. Dental tartar, formed when calcium salts from saliva are deposited on top of the plaque, creates a rough surface that causes more plaque to accumulate in a harmful cycle. Pets with periodontal disease can be at higher risk for heart, kidney, and liver disease if bacteria surrounding the roots enters the bloodstream.

The key to managing gum disease is prevention. Brushing and dental chew treats are good for daily maintenance. Younger dogs and cats should see us annually for a thorough dental cleaning, and semi-annual cleanings may be recommended for pets from middle-age on. Be sure to schedule your pet's dental cleaning soon!



## Is Your Pet Afraid of Fireworks?

Our pets' ears are much more sensitive than ours. While we may enjoy the "bombs bursting in air" on July 4th, to them it's just loud and scary! They may experience stress, anxiety, or even terror. Dogs may hide, try to get outside, or become destructive. It's best to keep them inside and supervised.

Products such as ThunderShirt® or pheromone-based sprays such as Adaptil® and Feliway® may help some pets. If your pet becomes overly anxious, contact us about other possibilities such as medications to help calm them. Of course, never let pets near any type of fireworks—even unlit, they can pose a danger.



## Watch for Worms!

### Protecting Your Pets from Parasites

**W**orm infestations can cause diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss, a swollen belly, dry fur, dull coat, increased heart rate, and sometimes death. Several types of these parasites can infect your pets. Roundworms and tapeworms are commonly seen in the stool—which is why your vet requests a stool sample—while others are difficult to detect. You may not even see symptoms since larvae can lay dormant in your pet's body for months or years.

**Roundworms:** Kittens and puppies are often born infected with roundworms, which can be transferred in the womb or through nursing. Female roundworms can produce 200,000 eggs each day, which can survive in soil for years. Symptoms include a pot-bellied appearance and poor growth.

**Tapeworms:** These segmented worms are carried by fleas and can grow to 6 inches long. The end segment is sometimes seen in the stool of infected pets and looks like a grain of rice. The best way to prevent tapeworms is through flea prevention.

**Whipworms:** Whipworms are more common in dogs than in cats. Tiny and thread-like, whipworm infestations are difficult to diagnose because they are seldom seen. Common symptoms are chronic weight loss, intermittent diarrhea, and mucous in stool.

**Hookworms:** Also found more often in dogs, hookworms can be transferred in soil where infected dogs have passed eggs. A severe infestation can kill puppies who become anemic from blood loss. Symptoms include weight loss, bloody diarrhea and progressive weakness.

**Heartworms:** This potentially fatal disease is transferred through mosquito bites and mainly affects dogs. The worms can grow a foot long and can infest the heart, lungs and blood vessels. This disease is difficult to cure, and we recommend keeping your dog on heartworm preventative year-round. Many heartworm medications are effective against other intestinal parasites as well.

Even healthy looking pets can carry worms, so it's important to have your pets checked regularly. Contact us for recommendations on parasite prevention.

**Call (620) 331-6327 today to make your appointment.**



## A Note from Ashley

### Keep Pets Cool to Prevent Heat Stroke

**H**i! I'm Ashley, a veterinary assistant for Dr. Barta and Dr. Cooper. I would like to talk a bit about heat stroke in pets. We see this every year and it can be a very scary situation!

Dogs cool themselves by panting. An overheated dog may drool excessively. It may become lethargic, its eyes may be bloodshot, and its gums may appear pale. Heat stroke (a form of hyperthermia) can lead to death!

Limit the time you spend outdoors to early morning or evening hours when the temperature is cooler as these are the best times to exercise your pet in the summer. A shallow plastic pool can mean backyard fun during these warmer months when your dog may want to cool off with a dip. Toss apple slices, baby carrots, or your dog's favorite treat into the pool for a kind of "bobbing for treats" game. You can also fill the pool with floating balls and toys.

All of us here at Barta Animal Hospital can't say this enough: Make sure your animal has plenty of fresh water and lots of shade during the summer. Prevention is the key to avoiding heat stroke.

*Have a great summer and STAY COOL!!*



**Help your pets enjoy the "dog days of summer" by keeping them healthy this season!**

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