

## **Feline Panleukopenia, a.k.a “Panleuk”**

### **What is Panleuk?**

Feline Panleukopenia is an extremely hardy virus that is very contagious to unvaccinated or freshly vaccinated cats and kittens. Without early intervention it can be a devastating, as well as deadly virus as it enters into the environment from the animal before they even display symptoms. It is hard to kill, lives a long time in the environment, and is easily spread. Thankfully, this virus cannot go between species and affects only felines.

### **What are the symptoms of Panleuk?**

If kittens stop eating or become less interested in eating, that is typically the first sign of Panleuk. Other symptoms include decreased activity to lethargy, diarrhea, diarrhea with blood, and vomiting. Sometimes symptoms are glaringly obvious, but sometimes they are more subtle.

### **Situational examples of symptoms:**

1. **Attitude/Activity change:** They can go from running around your house to just meandering around, or simply just not running around as excitedly.
2. **Appetite loss:** They scarf down a bowl of food that morning or the night prior but their next meal they only eat half the bowl, if at all.
3. **Stool change:** Stool is even becoming softer and darker in texture, or they seem to be uncomfortable while going to the bathroom. Or, their stool suddenly becomes diarrhea with an odd, sweeter smell to it.

***It's important to monitor your kitten's daily health, note any changes and report them as soon as they are noticed.***

### **I have cats at home!**

If your cats get their yearly distemper vaccine on time, which protects them from Panleukopenia, and have a good track record of their vaccines throughout their life, they will likely be fine! Regardless, everything should be cleaned appropriately, including any carpet or items with fabrics, like couches, that your kittens came in contact with.

If your own pet is not vaccinated, or is coming up on being due on their vaccine, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician and we can further discuss what to do to help your pets stay safe and how we can assist with that. If your animal were to

test positive for Panleuk, you must seek treatment with your primary veterinarian, as we will not be able to provide treatment.

### **Indirect spread of Panleuk**

You and your home can be a fomite for Panleuk. A fomite is an object or material that can carry infection. This includes clothes you wear and furniture the kittens have come in contact with. For example, if a panleuk kitten is shedding the virus but not showing symptoms yet, and you pet them and then go into another room and touch other items or sit on a couch, the virus can shed from you onto the couch or the other items you touched. If that happens, then there is a chance that the virus is now waiting on your couch or other objects for the next unvaccinated feline to come around, touch it, and get infected with it. This is why we recommend not having any unvaccinated felines in your home for at least 6 months after fostering a Panleuk positive feline.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

It is extremely important to report any symptoms of Panleuk you see in your fosters, especially kittens, including any changes in their attitude. We want to intervene as soon as possible! The sooner we are able to intervene, the better the outcome for all of the cats involved. We would rather check your foster pet and have it turn out to be nothing serious, versus holding off and seeing them when it is too late.

If you have been informed that another kitten in the same litter as your kitten tested positive, be on high alert for symptoms. If you notice the slightest change in attitude, appetite, or appearance in stool, please let the Foster Veterinary Technician know immediately. If it is the weekend, please follow the emergency protocol.

If your kittens have tested positive for Panleuk, they will stay at the shelter if possible (the only exception being neonates who need round-the-clock care) to start treatment until our veterinarian gives them the okay to go back to foster. Sometimes this is within a day, and sometimes it's a week later. It all depends on the severity of their illness and their response to treatments. The sooner we can catch it, the better and quicker the recovery in most cases. If you are willing to take your Panleuk kittens back, please know you may need to visit multiple times in a week if they decline different days of the week but are okay during others. They may need to come in for a night stay, or may just need a short visit to get a couple treatments, and then go back home with you.