

# Feline Respiratory Disease

## (Feline Snuffles)



This is very prevalent in Northland.

Most upper respiratory disease in cats is caused by either Feline Rhinotracheitis Virus (a herpes virus) or Feline Calicivirus, and less commonly an organism called Chlamydophila felis. Symptoms include fever, sore eyes with a purulent discharge, mouth ulcers, sneezing with a watery discharge from the nostrils progressing to a purulent discharge, and poor appetite. Infection with the herpes virus is generally more severe, and secondary corneal ulceration and pneumonia can occur. It can also cause pregnant cats to abort.

Feline Respiratory Disease is a highly contagious disease; easily passed from one cat to another when an infected cat coughs or sneezes, releasing droplets into the air. In a cattery or enclosed situation outbreaks of the disease occur when an infected cat is introduced.

Treatment is difficult as there are few antiviral drugs available for cats. Antibiotics are generally indicated to control secondary infection. Nursing care to encourage appetite and help clear the narrow airways is helpful.



Prevention is aided by management to reduce spread of the viruses & organisms and vaccination. Vaccination will not cure a cat already sick with or incubating the virus.

Vaccination should start in kittens before they come into contact with the virus. Vaccination will reduce the chances of your cat developing snuffles and will decrease the severity of the symptoms. Kittens are generally vaccinated primarily at 8 with boosters at 12 weeks. In high risk situations the first (sensitizer) dose can be given at 6 weeks, followed by two boosters 3 weeks apart. Because of the high prevalence of this disease Northland we recommend annual boosters. Most boarding catteries will insist on a minimum of annual boosters.

Many cats who have contracted the Herpes virus before vaccination become carriers and become sick with cold-like symptoms every time they are stressed. Unfortunately vaccination will not alter this except perhaps by reducing the severity of the symptoms.