

THE MUTATED VIRUS TARGETS A WHITE BLOOD CELL VITAL TO IMMUNITY

Feline infectious peritonitis is a fatal virus that comes in two forms: effusive (wet) and non-effusive (dry). Although FIPV can affect any cat of any age or breed, kittens are more prone to infection, particularly those in shelters or catteries, as well as geriatric cats. Purebreds appear to have greater vulnerability, especially Asian breeds, such as the Birman and Himalayan. In both forms, symptoms include fever, diarrhea, weight loss and lack of appetite. The wet form is characterized by fluid accumulation in the chest or abdomen. The dry form may affect vision and/or cause other neurological problems, possibly leading to

blindness and/or paralysis. The mutated virus targets macrophages, a specific type of white blood cell that plays key roles in a cat's immune system. Infected cats usually die within weeks of contracting this virus. The disease has no cure.

By contrast, the feline enteric coronavirus (FECV) is a benign condition that triggers mild diarrhea or gastrointestinal episodes, but is not fatal in the vast majority of cases. The virus is generally transmitted from one cat to another through infected feces and contaminated surfaces, such as food dishes. Most cats with FECV do not develop FIP.