

TEN MOST COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS IN CATS

PARASITE: FLEAS

Fleas afflict domestic and feral cats alike, cause extreme discomfort and can spread disease to both cats and humans. A cat with fleas will itch herself repeatedly and vigorously, and you may also notice hair loss and scabby skin. Fleas multiply quickly and should be eliminated as soon as possible. Many pet supply stores sell a variety of ointments, flea collars and flea bath liquids designed to kill fleas and their eggs.

PARASITE: WORMS

Worms, for the most part, invade your cat's body and live inside him, stealing nutrients and causing intestinal problems. Worms enter your cat's body via ingestion or close contact with eggs, which can be too small to see with the naked eye. A cat infected with worms will often exhibit a personality change, becoming aggressive or restless. An infected cat may also eat more or less than normal for extended periods of time. Worms are also often visible in the cat's stool when they are present. Hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms are common forms that can afflict both cats and dogs.

PARASITE: TICKS

Ticks latch onto your cat's skin and drain blood from beneath the surface. Some ticks are incredibly small and are virtually undetectable until they have grown in size. Ticks carry several chronic, deadly diseases, including Lyme disease. Ticks are often felt as an odd lump or bump in your cat's fur. Checking your outdoor cats regularly will minimize the risk of long-term damage from ticks.

DISORDER: CONJUNCTIVITIS

Conjunctivitis infects your cat's eyes, leaving them red and swollen. Conjunctivitis causes your cat's eye(s) to leak a milky, runny liquid, and often inhibits proper function of the eye itself. Keep the eye clean with approved eye drops for several weeks. Conjunctivitis is not a lethal condition and can be easily treated.

DISORDER: ROTTING TEETH

Another common health problem for domestic cats is bad breath and tooth decay. Tooth decay happens to all animals; providing your cat with treats that are designed to clean teeth will help your cat's teeth last longer. It is also possible to brush your cat's teeth, but you will probably want to bring a friend to hold the cat down if you decide to give your cat's teeth a scrub.

DISORDER: RESPIRATORY

There are a variety of causes and symptoms of respiratory distress in cats. Shallow breathing is a common indicator that something is wrong with your cat's lungs. Constant wheezing or difficulty breathing means you will likely need to make a trip to a veterinarian as soon as possible to avoid a lethal respiratory infection.

INFECTION: RINGWORM

Despite its name, ringworm is not a worm or a parasite. Ringworm is a fungus that causes loss of hair and itchiness. It is not lethal, but if left unchecked ringworm can lead to intense skin and hair loss problems for your cat. Ringworm is highly contagious and can spread from humans to cats and vice versa, so be careful when handling a cat that appears to be infected with ringworm.

INFECTION: FIV

FIV, or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, is the cat equivalent of HIV. It is not always lethal on its own, but when combined with another infection it can cause your cat's health to deteriorate rapidly. FIV is a leading cause of disease-related death in cats, and is transmitted from cat to cat via the exchange of bodily fluids. FIV debilitates your cat's immune system, leaving him open to any infection or disease he comes into contact with.

INFECTION: FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS

Feline Leukaemia Virus is an incredibly dangerous, contagious disease. There are vaccines available, but kittens and large groups of cats are often extremely susceptible to a Feline Leukaemia epidemic. If you think a cat may be infected with the Feline Leukaemia Virus, under no circumstances allow it to come into contact with another cat.

INFECTION: LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is spread by ticks, a common parasite found on the skin of outdoor cats. Lyme disease does not spread from cats to humans, but can be spread to both by ticks. Symptoms of Lyme disease in cats include reluctance to engage in intense activity, consistent lethargy and loss of appetite. The only way to be sure your cat has the disease is to have his blood tested. If you catch the disease in its early stages, it is easily treatable and will not become a chronic disorder.