Foster – Panleukopenia

 **What is Panleukopenia?**

Panleukopenia (panleuk), also referred to as feline distemper, is a highly contagious virus that can cause serious illness in cats and can be fatal. It is a parvovirus, closely related to the canine parvovirus. The virus is very stable and can remain in the environment for an extended period of time without proper disinfection. It has been reported that the virus can survive indoors at room temperature for a year, is able to survive freezing temperatures outdoors, and also cannot be killed with common disinfectants such as alcohol and iodine.

**How does it spread?**

The virus is shed by an infected cat in all bodily secretions including feces, saliva, mucous, vomit and urine. Because the vaccination is so effective, and some natural immunity develops as most cats will have been exposed to it in their lives, it is a disease that most commonly affects young, unvaccinated kittens.

**Can people or dogs catch Panleuk?**

People cannot catch Panleuk. Panleuk is a parvovirus, closely related to canine parvovirus. While unlikely, unvaccinated or immune compromised puppies may be susceptible to developing illness if exposed to the virus.

**What about other cats or kittens?**

All cats and kittens should be vaccinated against Panleuk. Kittens must receive a series of vaccines to be fully protected and are the most vulnerable to catching this disease and becoming seriously ill. Unvaccinated adult cats can catch Panleuk, but may be symptom-free or show less severe symptoms unless old or immune compromised.

**What if my foster kitten has been exposed to Panleuk?**

If your foster kitten had a direct exposure to another kitten that was diagnosed with Panleuk, this makes them a high risk for developing the disease. However, until they develop clinical signs, a test is not an effective means of determining if they will become symptomatic.

Your foster kitten will need to be monitored closely and kept in an environment away from unvaccinated or immune compromised cats and dogs for 2 weeks after the date of the last exposure. They should be kept in a confined and safe space that can easily be cleaned and disinfected.

Your kitten should be monitored closely for any of the following signs: vomiting, foul-smelling often bloody diarrhea, loss of appetite, fever, weakness, lethargy and dehydration. If any of these clinical signs are observed, contact the Foster Care Manager immediately. Panleuk is a medical emergency. Early detection and treatment is crucial for survival.

If your kitten does test positive for Panleuk while in your home, your home will be contaminated. Proper cleaning and disinfecting of all surfaces and objects the kitten came into contact will be imperative. You will receive further direction on disinfecting if this should occur. Stable kittens will remain in a foster home for treatment and care following a diagnosis. If you are able to provide treatment and supportive care for the kitten, you will be equipped with the necessary medications, supplies and direction.

**What if my foster kitten is diagnosed with Panleuk?**

While there is no cure for Panleuk, swift and aggressive therapies can be successful in supporting them while they recover from the virus. Stable kittens are treated in the foster home. Treatment involves an intensive regimen of medications and supportive care. Maintaining proper hydration and nutrition, as well as controlling clinical signs, comfort, and secondary bacterial infection is crucial. This will include frequent monitoring of the kitten. Oral, and possibly injectable, medications and supplements will need to be administered often two to three times daily. If the kitten is not eating, or not eating and adequate amount, they will need to be supplementally syringe fed. It has been noted that a kitten who survives the first 5 days is likely to survive the infection.

A kitten that does survive and recover from the disease may shed the virus, and are considered contagious, for up to 6 weeks following recovery. During that time it is still important that they be kept separate from other unvaccinated or immune compromised cats and dogs.

**Non-emergent concerns**, please email Fosters@hshv.org or call 734-661-3520

**For emergencies**, please contact the foster emergency number 734-717-4424