



FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION FACT SHEET

Sioux Falls Area Humane Society
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WHAT IS A FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION?	Feline upper respiratory infection, or feline URI, is a general term for respiratory infections in cats. These infections are primarily caused by viruses, but may be complicated by bacteria. These diseases are highly contagious between cats, but generally cannot be spread to other species, like humans or dogs.
HOW IS URI SPREAD?	Feline URI is spread through secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected cat. These secretions can be transferred by direct contact from cat to cat, by sneezing, or via objects like toys, bowls, human hands and clothing. Some infected cats may show no signs of illness, but are still able to spread the disease.
WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?	Symptoms most commonly include sneezing, nasal discharge (which may be clear, green or even bloody), nasal congestion, and eye irritation/discharge. Cats may run a fever, become depressed, lose their appetite and become dehydrated. In severe cases, death may occur.
WHY IS URI SO COMMON IN SHELTER CATS?	Stressed, unvaccinated animals living in close quarters are most susceptible to infections. Many of our cats were once strays or did not receive routine veterinary care. With so many vulnerable animals in one area, illness is very difficult to prevent, despite our strict cleaning protocols.
HOW IS URI TREATED?	If the illness is mild, a cat may not require medications, and may simply need time for the infection to run its course. As our animals are under a great deal of stress, we may prescribe antibiotics to treat bacteria that may complicate the viral disease. Remember, antibiotics are not effective against viruses, so it may take up to six weeks for the infection to run its course.
WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?	Once a cat is adopted, we <i>always</i> recommend that new owners follow up with their veterinarian. Being on antibiotics is not a guarantee that a cat will recover uneventfully. Signs of a severe infection include lethargy, unwillingness to eat, and fever. Please contact your veterinarian if you see any of these signs or have any other concerns.
CAN MY CAT AT HOME CATCH FELINE URI?	Yes! Even cats that have been vaccinated may contract the disease. Not all causes of URI can be prevented with vaccines. Any cat that has been in a shelter setting should be kept separate from healthy cats for a minimum of two weeks or until your veterinarian tells you that your cat is no longer contagious.