

Herpes Virus in cats

Herpes viruses are *species specific* and therefore Herpes virus affecting cats cannot affect humans nor other pets such as horses nor dogs. Transmission of Herpes virus in cats may occur when a cat is actively shedding virus as part of an upper respiratory infection. We do not know why some cats have recurrent disease, although stress (behavioral, or household) is thought to be an attributing factor.

Tests for Herpes virus in cats include serology (serum neutralization) or tissue samples (PCR testing for Herpes DNA).

Currently a number of medications are used to treat Herpes Virus infection in cats:

Topically:

- **Trifluridine eye drops (Viroptic®) 1-6 times daily**
- **Idoxuridine eye drops (Herplex®) 1-6 times daily**

Orally:

- **Famcicovir 500mg tablets (1/8-1/4 tablet once daily by mouth)**
- Interferon alfa 3000IU/CC
- L-lysine 250mg 1-2 times daily

No studies have concluded that Interferon nor L-lysine have any effect on Herpes Virus infection in cats. Some medications may have side effects (including oral aciclovir) and are therefore not typically recommended in cats.

Many cats with ocular disease attributed to Herpes Virus have a degree of dry eye and therefore artificial tear supplementation may be used symptomatically. We recommend the following two compounds (both available over the counter):

- Blink® contacts by AMO (over the counter) every 2-4 hours.
- Celluvisc® Refresh by Allergan (over the counter) every 3-6 hours (typically during the night).

As an owner it is important to realize that your cat may get better with or without treatment prescribed. Most cats get better over time although it can take months before improvement is noted.

The main complications associated with Herpes virus which may end up needing systemic treatment and/or surgery include: eosinophilic keratitis, corneal sequestration, secondary (bacterial) corneal infection.

Should you have any further questions about Herpes Virus or the treatment of your animal, call our office and ask to speak to Drs. Clinton or Evans.