

# Feline Infectious Anemia

( Hemobart or Hemobartonellosis)

Hemobart, or Feline Infectious Anemia is a infection of cats, in which their red blood cells are infected by a microscopic blood parasite. The condition is caused by a tiny, microscopic parasite that attaches itself to the surface of the cat's red blood cell and destroys the cell, resulting in anemia. The anemia may be mild, at least early in the infection, and not cause any obvious signs. Many cases of hemobart can go undetected for some period of time. Some of these subclinical cats remain long-term carriers of the disease and unknowingly spread the disease to other cats. Later in life, some other infection such as feline leukemia may lower the cat's immunity and FIA may become clinically evident.

## Signs of Hemobart in an infected cat:

- Weakness (sudden or gradual)
- Pale or yellow-tinged mucous membranes in the gums, nose
- Fever
- Diffuse whole-body tenderness
- Rapid breathing rate
- Weight loss
- Fever

## Diagnosis:

Upon examination by a veterinarian, pale (possibly yellow tinged) mucous membranes, fever, fatigue, depression, tachypnea (rapid respiratory rate), tachycardia (rapid heart rate), decreased appetite, and enlarged liver and spleen may be observed. A blood sample will be taken from your cat and examined under the microscope to see if the parasite is present

## Treatment:

Treatment for non-severe cases of Hemobart typically include a dose of antibiotics, in most cases Doxycycline. We typically also prescribe a liquid vitamin called Lixotinic since most cats experience some level of anemia.

You will be asked to bring you cat back in after the first round of antibiotics to determine if the parasite is still in their bloodstream. If Hemobart is still present then we will prescribe another round of antibiotics and have you repeat the test again after that round is complete. It may take a few rounds of antibiotics before getting a negative test result. In severe cases a blood transfusion may be recommended.

## Transmission to other cats:

The major transmission route of FIA is thought to be biting, blood-sucking parasites such as fleas. Direct cat to cat transmission or by contaminated food bowls and litter-trays seems unlikely. Even if there are other cats in the household they may remain uninfected, or at least symptom-free. However, the bite from an infected cat may spread the infection. The incubation period may be as long as seven weeks although a two week incubation period is more normal. Due to this long incubation period, the actual source of the infection may be difficult to determine. Since the way it is spread between cats is not fully understood, good hygienic practices should be followed.