

Many cats carry a virus called *Feline Enteric Coronavirus (FOCV)* in their gut. FOCV is generally harmless, or at worst can cause mild diarrhoea. Unfortunately, for reasons not well understood, FOCV can undergo a mutation. This mutation allows the virus to enter immune cells called macrophage cells and travel around the body. This results in the deadly virus known as *Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)*.

Diagnosis

FIP usually affects young cats <3 years of age, and is more common in purebred cats, and in cats that have been housed together in a shelter or breeding facility. Signs of FIP can be vague include a persistent fever that fails to respond to antibiotics, weight loss, poor appetite, heavy breathing, a distended belly, or low energy.

Diagnosis can be difficult, but usually requires a combination of blood tests, X-rays, ultrasound, sampling, and specific testing such as IFA or PCR (a DNA test). Some cats require MRI scans or a spinal tap.

Most cats with FIP will invariably die if untreated, and euthanasia is generally the only other acceptable alternative. Until recently, FIP was considered a condition with no known treatment.

Treatment:

Thanks to many years of research from a dedicated research teams around the world, treatment is now available.

This medication is called Remdesivir (the injectable form), which MASH stocks for emergency use, meaning it can be started immediately without awaiting a special order from a compounding pharmacy, which can take 24-48hrs.

Additional treatments in hospital may include an intravenous drip, drainage of any fluid (for example, around the lungs), oxygen therapy or feeding tubes.

A complete course of treatment takes 84 days. This will be in tablet form or liquid, with the medication being specially formulated for each cat. The oral medication is very similar to Remdesivir and is called GS-441524. It can be obtained from a compounding pharmacy with a veterinary script.

The cost of treating FIP can be very high, with medications alone being in the range of \$2200-4500 (as of June 2025). An 85% success rate is reported. Complications can include worsening respiratory signs, seizures, difficulty tableting, prolonged hospital stays or failure to respond. Some cats may be suitable to start tablets right away, for example if they are still eating. Relapse rates and survival times are currently not known.

