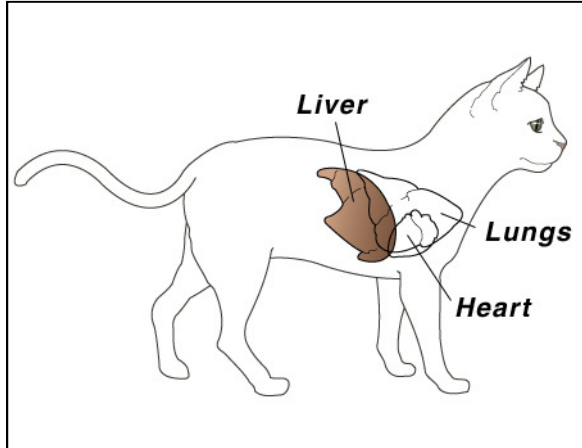


FELINE FATTY LIVER SYNDROME

What is Fatty Liver Syndrome, and how does a cat get it?

Feline Fatty Liver Syndrome (FLS) is also known as feline hepatic lipidosis. This disease is unique in cats and is one of the most common liver diseases seen in cats.



The typical cat with FLS has recently gone through a period of not eating for three to four consecutive days or more. The chances of FLS occurring are greater if the cat was obese before the cat stopped eating. As fat is broken down to supply nutrients for the anorectic cat, the fat is deposited so rapidly in the liver that it cannot be processed. It becomes stored in and around the liver cells, resulting in liver failure. The cat usually becomes icteric or jaundiced, as evidenced by a yellow color in the whites of the eyes or in the skin. At this point, the disease will be fatal if not treated rapidly and aggressively.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis of FLS is made from blood tests for liver function and from a liver biopsy or aspirate. The latter may be performed during surgery or with a needle inserted through the skin. The tissue sample is sent to a veterinary pathologist for interpretation. The FLS cat will have a large amount of fat in and among the liver cells. Generally, other tests are then performed to determine why the cat originally stopped eating. If the cause for anorexia is treatable or resolved, the prognosis is reasonably good.

Is this a treatable disease?

This disease is very treatable, but treatment of FLS requires that the cat receive aggressive nutritional support until the appetite returns. A consistently high quality diet will allow the liver to resume functioning so it may remove the fat. This does not occur quickly; it takes an average of six to seven weeks. Therefore, a method of feeding must be used to allow you to feed your cat at home.

How do I provide the necessary nutritional support?

A feeding tube is surgically implanted into your cat so you can syringe feed a special diet through the feeding tube into the stomach. There are several types of feeding tubes available. The best one for your cat will be determined based on several factors.

A special food mixture is syringed through the tube three to five times per day. This food is formulated to meet the cat's nutritional needs; it should not cause vomiting or diarrhea. To feed your cat, follow these steps:

When is the tube removed?

Persistence is essential. The average cat requires six to seven weeks of feeding before it begins to eat after an episode of FLS. At least once weekly, offer your cat a small amount of its favorite food by mouth so that you will know when its appetite returns. The feeding tube will not hinder eating in any way. After your cat has been eating well for three to four days, it should be returned to the hospital for tube removal. Removal of the tube is simple and does not require anesthesia; however, you should not attempt to remove the tube yourself.

NOTE: Technically, a cubic centimeter (cc) and a milliliter (ml) are slightly different. However, for our purposes, a cc is the same as a ml. Syringes are often marked in cc's.
