



## **Foster Parents Guide to Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)**

URI is similar to the common cold in humans. It is especially common in cats that have been exposed to a lot of other cats, such as in an animal shelter. URI is usually resolved in one to three weeks. Treatment generally consists of supportive care. In addition, antibiotics are sometimes given to treat possible bacterial infections. However, although secondary bacterial infections can make the problem worse, the underlying cause is often a viral infection. Viral infections are not cured by antibiotics – as with the common cold, there is no completely effective treatment besides time and allowing the cat’s own immune system to do its job.

### **What are the signs of URI?**

- Clear or colored nasal discharge (snot)
- Sneezing
- Red inflamed conjunctiva (lining of the eyes)
- Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite

**\*PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO NOTIFY A-PAL OF YOUR FOSTERS CONDITION SO WE CAN HELP.**

### **How contagious is URI and can your own pets contract it?**

- URI is contagious to other cats. It is recommended to isolate any cats that are showing symptoms of the illness and to wash your hands thoroughly after dealing with URI cats.
- As a general rule we recommend you isolate all new fosters in your household for a couple weeks to give them a chance to settle in and ensure they are healthy.

### **What can I do to make my foster cat feel better? A warm, quiet, comfy place to rest and TLC!**

- Make sure the cat is eating. When cats get stuffy noses, they can’t smell their food very well and may not want to eat. Offer canned food, AD wet food (available at Paws center) canned chicken, tuna or salmon, or meat flavored baby food. Heating the wet food can increase the odor and entice the kitty to eat.
- If the cat is producing discharge from eyes or nose, gently clean the cat’s nose and eyes with a soft cloth wet with warm water.
- If the cat is very congested, use a humidifier or put the cat in the bathroom and run hot water in the shower for a few minutes a couple of times a day. For a more concentrated steam treatment, put the cat in a carrier next to the sink, cover the carrier and the faucet with a thick towel and run the water on hot for 5-10 minutes. The steam should remain trapped under the towel.
- “Little Noses” is an over the counter decongestant designed for infants that can help kittens too! A drop in each nostril 2 times a day can help.

### **When do I contact A-PAL for veterinary attention?**

- Not eating for more than 24 hours.



- Green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing through an open mouth
- Depressed or unresponsive cat: a slight decrease in activity is expected, but if the cat is much less active than you would expect, contact the shelter
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours
- Little or no improvement after a week of home supportive care.

\*Kittens and cats with underlying conditions can be more fragile and their condition can change rapidly. PLEASE don't hesitate to contact Susan Manning at (209)304-9590 at any time of the day or A-Pal between 9am-4pm at (209)223-0410.

#### **What can I expect the veterinarian to prescribe?**

- If an infection is indicated by fever or green or yellow discharge or other symptoms, the vet may prescribe an antibiotic. Give the antibiotic as directed, until it is gone. Do not stop giving the antibiotic if the cat seems to be getting better, continue as prescribed.
- If eyes are affected by the URI, eye ointment may be prescribed, administer as directed.

#### **How do I know my foster kitties are improving?**

- Increased appetite
- Increased activity
- Sneezing almost never
- No ocular or nasal discharge

If you do not see an improvement in 3-5 days, or if the cats become MORE ill than when seen by the veterinarian, arrange with PAWS for them to come and be seen again by veterinarian. Just because they are 'on treatment' does not mean they will get better, careful monitoring of eating habits, energy levels, and symptoms is VERY important. If you are concerned, please contact PAWS to get them evaluated and scheduled to be seen.

#### **How do I know when my kittens are all better?**

- Cats have completed all prescribed medication
- Cats have been symptom free for 5 to 7 days. No sneezing, no watery eyes, no boogery noses.
- Cats are eating regularly and have a normal activity level.