



Date: June 18, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV) Present at LBACS**

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On June 12, 2021, Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS) discovered that a kitten who entered the shelter on June 4<sup>th</sup> had contracted Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV), also known as Feline Distemper. On June 13, 14, and 16, additional kittens were also confirmed to be infected with FPV. LBACS staff are implementing several measures that will protect the population of cats currently in their care.

### **What is FPV?**

FPV is a feline virus that causes the infected animal to lose all defenses against any viruses or bacteria. In an unvaccinated population of cats, it is the deadliest disease. It is this for this reason that LBACS takes care and precautions when handling cats to limit the spread of all disease as much as possible.

### **How Do You Know if a Cat is Infected With FPV?**

You cannot tell for sure just by looking at the cat. Veterinarians can order fecal tests to test a cat for FPV. Cats are not likely to have FPV if they have received a full series of three or more FPV vaccines when they were kittens. Vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, or sudden death are the most common symptoms. Cats may develop a fever. The illness progresses quickly and often silently with no warning, usually resulting in death for young cats.

### **How is FPV Spread?**

Cats catch FPV from other cats that are infected with it. They can catch it by having direct contact with sick cats or cats that appear healthy but may be carrying the virus. The virus is present in bodily fluids and/or feces. Exposure to the virus happens when a cat comes into contact with items contaminated by infected cats. This can happen through litterbox use, grooming, using the same food and water bowls, bedding materials, toys, or other objects that were contaminate by the infected animals. Kittens and unvaccinated cats are the most likely to catch it.

### **How is FPV Treated?**

Currently, there is no treatment that kills the virus inside the cat. The virus is highly contagious and will persist in an environment for a long term. Veterinarians administer medications to reduce vomiting, diarrhea, and inappetence, antibiotics for secondary infections, as well as provide supportive care, like fluid therapy while the cat's body fights off the virus. Treatment

can take several days of intensive care, including overnight monitoring and care. Full recovery can take several weeks. To properly care for cats infected with FPV, appropriate isolation space away from all other cats is needed. In addition, persons caring for cats must be in very close contact with infected cats and their bodily fluids for long periods of time. These factors threaten the health and safety of current and future populations of animals. Currently, there are no transfer partners registered with LBACS that can take kittens infected with FPV. For these reasons, and at this time, kittens infected with FPV are not treated at LBACS and are instead euthanized as the most humane approach during this outbreak of this deadly disease.

### **Why is FPV in the Shelter?**

FPV is not a shelter-specific disease. This is a disease that commonly kills unvaccinated stray cats and kittens, and was likely introduced by an unowned, unvaccinated cat or kitten that was brought to the shelter. FPV vaccines are highly effective, and this disease is preventable. All cats and kittens over four weeks of age are vaccinated upon intake to the shelter.

### **How Can FPV Be Contained?**

LBACS is managing FPV with live containment: sick cats and kittens are isolated from healthy cats and kittens. LBACS admission and cleaning practices and policy follow best industry practices regarding cleaning and disinfection including:

- Vaccinating all animals 4 weeks of age and older upon admission, and every 2 weeks until they reach 20 weeks of age
- Care and cleaning in specified order
  1. Healthy kittens and healthy nursing queens
  2. Healthy adult cats
  3. Unhealthy adult cats including those that are sick and/or contagious
  4. Quarantined areas
- Not handling cats (when possible) during the cleaning process
- Disinfecting enclosures when empty and prior to occupancy
- Changing gloves prior to handling a new set of animals and between touching items belonging to different animals

To contain the spread of the disease, LBACS staff are implementing several measures that will protect the population of cats currently in our care. First, we are limiting the intake of felines to only those that are sick, injured, or in need of medical attention. No healthy cats and kittens not in need of immediate medical attention will be admitted to LBACS. Next, LBACS shelter veterinarians have established a quarantine that will be in effect 14 days from the last date of the incident of the disease. No new admissions will be allowed to be housed in the affected room where kittens infected with FPV were identified. Quarantine may be lifted on July 1<sup>st</sup>, provided no new cases occur. Any new cases that present during the quarantine may require either extending this quarantine period or placing additional affected areas of the shelter on quarantine. Cats and kittens that show any signs or symptoms of illness will be tested for FPV.

LBACS has also reached out to all of our cat transfer partners to assist us in reducing the current population of approximately 175 cats and kittens at the shelter.

As is recommended whenever there is disease present and persisting in a shelter environment, we are in the process of reviewing our cleaning and care protocols to ensure staff continue to provide care in the safest, most humane manner possible, both in the shelter and in the field.

### **What Can Members of the Community Do to Help Prevent the Spread of FPV?**

1. **Vaccination** - Cat owners are strongly encouraged to keep their cats up to date on their vaccines. FPV vaccines are highly effective, and this disease is preventable. FPV is prevented by vaccinating kittens with a series of 3 or more Panleukopenia vaccines between the ages of 2 and 4 months. Panleukopenia is the “P” in the FVRCP vaccine for cats. The vaccine must be given again (booster) a year later, then every three years for life.
2. **Protect kittens** - Keep kittens at home, inside, away from unfamiliar cats, until they have finished their complete vaccination series. Pet cats are always safest when kept indoors or when safely contained in outdoor environments.
3. **Keep your cat away from sick cats and stray cats** - Sick cats can contaminate litterboxes and the environment and transfer the virus to your cat. Do not let your cat have direct contact with any sick cats, nor share food/water bowls or resting spaces with sick cats or unknown cats.
4. **Keep pet food and water indoors, away from outdoor cats** - Outdoor pet food and water can attract stray cats. Community cats who have already been spayed, neutered, and vaccinated are less of a threat to your cats. However, cats that have not entered a Community Cats program can be a serious risk to your cats.
5. **Do not bring healthy cats to animal shelters** - Community members should refrain from bringing any healthy cats and kittens to any animal shelter. Allow these animals to remain in place and contact animal services to obtain assistance and vouchers to care for and have these animals spayed and neutered.

Incidences of FPV and FPV outbreaks occur in cat populations where many cats are unvaccinated. Animal shelters typically see many cases each year as most cats and kittens entering shelters are unvaccinated prior to admission.

LBACS assists residents who have any community cats or “free roaming” cats in their neighborhood surgically sterilized (spayed or neutered), and vaccinated. LBACS can provide resources, including lending traps and providing spay/neuter vouchers, to help offset the cost of surgery to residents who are willing to trap cats, take them to a veterinary clinic for surgical sterilization, vaccination, and return the cat to the location where they were found after the cat recovers from their surgery. In addition, LBACS will provide community members with supplies to care for cats and kittens. Thanks to a generous donation from Helen Sanders Cat PAWS, LBACS provides Kitten Care Kits that have all the supplies needed to care for kittens until they can be weaned.

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For more information about assistance with community cats, visit our website at <https://www.longbeach.gov/acs/about-us/community-cats/>. For all other shelter assistance inquiries, email [AnimalCare@longbeach.gov](mailto:AnimalCare@longbeach.gov). Media inquiries can be directed to Staycee Dains, Animal Care Services Manager, at (562) 570-3051 or [Staycee.Dains@longbeach.gov](mailto:Staycee.Dains@longbeach.gov).

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