

DISEASE CAUSED BY *CHLAMYDOPHILA*, A TYPE OF BACTERIA (CHLAMYDIOSIS) IN CATS

BASICS

OVERVIEW

- A long-term (chronic) respiratory tract infection of cats caused by an intracellular bacteria, *Chlamydomphila felis*
- Characterized by inflammation of the moist tissues of the eye (known as “conjunctivitis”), mild upper respiratory signs, and mild inflammation of the lungs (known as “pneumonitis”)
- The respiratory tract consists of the “upper respiratory tract” (the nose, nasal passages, throat, and windpipe [trachea]) and the “lower respiratory tract” (the bronchi, bronchioles, and alveoli [the terminal portion of the airways, in which oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged])

SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

Species

- Cats
- People

Mean Age and Range

- Usually kittens 2 to 6 months of age; any age cat possible

SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Cat may be infected, but have no signs of disease (known as a “subclinical infection”)
- Clinical disease only develops if the animal has a simultaneous infection by other disease-causing agents (such as viruses)
- Upper respiratory infection, with some sneezing, watery eyes, and coughing
- Sometimes difficult breathing (known as “dyspnea”)
- Varying degree of lack of appetite (known as “anorexia”)
- Inflammation of the moist tissues of the eyes (conjunctivitis)—often granular; initially involving one eye, sometimes involving both eyes
- Excessive production of tears (known as “lacrimation”); avoidance of light (known as “photophobia”); and squinting or spasmodic blinking (known as “blepharospasm”)
- Inflammation of the nose (known as “rhinitis”) with discharge from the nose—usually mild
- Inflammation of the lungs (pneumonitis)—with the inflammatory process in the alveoli (the terminal portion of the airways, in which oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged), bronchioles and airways producing abnormal breath sounds as heard when listening to the chest with a stethoscope (known as “auscultation”)

CAUSES

- *Chlamydomphila felis*
- *Chlamydia* species

RISK FACTORS

- Simultaneous infections with other respiratory disease-causing agents (such as viruses)
- Lack of vaccination
- Multi-cat facilities, especially adoption shelters and breeding catteries

TREATMENT

HEALTH CARE

- Generally as an outpatient
- Keep nostrils and eyes clean of discharge
- Generally does not require other supportive therapy (such as administration of fluids), unless complicated by simultaneous infections

ACTIVITY

- Quarantine affected cats from contact with other cats
- Do not allow affected cats to go outside

DIET

- Normal

MEDICATIONS

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive.

- Antibiotics administered by mouth (systemic treatment)—tetracycline; doxycycline
- Antibiotics applied to the eye directly (topical treatment)—eye ointments containing tetracycline
- Other antibiotics are generally less effective than tetracycline

FOLLOW-UP CARE

PATIENT MONITORING

- Monitor for improved health as treatment proceeds

PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE

- Vaccines are available to reduce the severity and duration of infection; vaccines do not prevent infection
- Discuss the need for vaccinating your cat against this disease with the veterinarian

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Adverse vaccine reactions—mild clinical disease following administration of modified live vaccines; occurs in a small percentage of vaccinated cats

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Tends to be long-term (chronic) disease, lasting for several weeks or months, unless successful antibiotic treatment is given
- Prognosis good

KEY POINTS

- Vaccines are available to reduce the severity and duration of infection; vaccines do not prevent infection
- Tends to be long-term (chronic) disease, lasting for several weeks or months, unless successful antibiotic treatment is given
- Clinical disease only develops if the animal has a simultaneous infection by other disease-causing agents (such as viruses)

