



Chlamydia is not particularly common in the average pet cat but can be a significant problem in cats in close contact. It is very easily spread from cat to cat. It is rarely fatal, but can be a real problem because the symptoms may be very difficult to clear up. Prevention is far better than cure - if your cat needs protection make sure she is fully protected by regular vaccinations.

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that causes conjunctivitis (sore, swollen eyes with a white discharge) and very occasional breathing problems. It most commonly causes disease in cats that live in groups.

How is the disease spread?

Kittens are often protected by antibodies from their mother until around 8 weeks old. The bacterium is spread in the air and the kittens can be infected as their maternal protection wanes.

How do I know if my cat has chlamydia?

The signs of chlamydia infection are very obvious - usually there is redness and swelling of the eyelids. Excess tear production and coloured discharges from the eyes are common. Occasionally kittens are more severely affected and may have coughing, sneezing or difficulty breathing.

Can I catch conjunctivitis from my cat?

There is no evidence that disease can be spread from cats to man. When handling a sick cat you should always take careful hygiene precautions and pay particular care to hand washing. The disease is very contagious and can easily be spread from cat to cat.

Can chlamydia infection be treated?

Eye drops containing antibiotics can be effective in controlling the infection, but antibiotic tablets may be needed as well. Nursing care is important and eyes should be bathed regularly to remove secretions.

Will my cat get better?

Most fit young cats will recover from chlamydia infection after a few weeks - although in a few cats that do get over the initial illness the bacteria may remain in their system. Cats that have recovered from disease may carry the organism for months or years and pass it on to other cats.

Can chlamydia be prevented?

If your cat lives in close proximity to other cats then hygiene is very important to reduce the transmission of all diseases. Good ventilation is important and there should be air spaces between all cages to prevent droplets being carried in the air between cats.

If your cat is at risk from catching chlamydia then vaccination may be helpful. The vaccine is not given as a part of the routine course and you should discuss with your vet whether your cat needs to have the vaccination. Vaccination does not always prevent infection, but it usually stops severe disease developing. Vaccinated cats may still therefore carry infection and can pass it on to susceptible cats.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your cat please contact Orwell Veterinary Group on 01473 33677 and we will be happy to advise you.