

Where is this outbreak?

We are aware of a recent outbreak in the Southern Suburbs of SA. The two cats who have tested positive for feline enteritis are unowned cats from a stray colony in the Christie's Beach area, living at an industrial car dealership on Beach road.

When was this outbreak first discovered, and how?

Our Head Veterinarian, Dr Brad Ward, received a call on Saturday December 21, 2019 from a vet at Payneham. This vet told Dr Brad that she had received a cat from one of our local rescues, Cats in Crisis, and had confirmed a second positive case of feline enteritis.

How many cats have been infected now?

We are aware of two cases where cats have tested positive for the condition, but likely all cats from the same stray colony in Christies Beach are infected. It is likely that this environment is badly contaminated since unowned cats are not vaccinated.

What has happened to them?

Unfortunately, this condition is difficult to treat and the mortality rate is high. The two cats who tested positive to this condition were so unwell that the only option was humane euthanasia.

Why has this outbreak happened now?

It is possible that feline enteritis has been spreading among unvaccinated, stray cat colonies for a while. Cats who have not been vaccinated are at risk.

How common is this condition?

Feline Enteritis is very uncommon in owned cats since vaccination is so widespread. However, it can occur in unowned, un-vaccinated cats.

When was the last outbreak in SA, and where?

We are unaware of how long the disease has been spreading among un-vaccinated, unowned cat colonies. Last year, a number of kittens died at the contaminated site in Christies Beach – they were likely infected with the condition.

What are the symptoms of feline enteritis?

- Severe and sudden onset of gastroenteritis
- Vomit or diarrhoea where blood is present
- Lethargy in kittens and cats over 3-4 weeks old
- Sudden loss of appetite/stopped eating
- High fever
- Dehydration
- Uncharacteristic hiding
- Depression

Which animals are particularly vulnerable?

Fully vaccinated cats are very unlikely to become infected. However, kittens younger than four months old need multiple vaccinations until we can be confident that they are fully protected from infection. Unvaccinated cats of any age are at risk.

I don't live close to Christies Beach – is my cat still at risk?

We are unaware of the presence of this condition anywhere else in SA. However, it is possible that it exists in any colony of un-vaccinated, unowned cats. Regardless of where you live, if you keep your cat's vaccinations up to date, there is very little chance of this disease infecting them.

How long does it take for the vaccination to work?

It can take between 3 and 7 days for cats to develop a strong immunity after vaccination.

How old does my cat need to be before he/she can be vaccinated?

Cats may begin receiving vaccinations at around 6 weeks of age, but need multiple vaccinations until 4 months of age.

Is this vaccination included in the usual vaccinations you get for cats?

Yes.

If my cat is showing some of these symptoms, what should I do?

Ring your local vet and explain your cat's symptoms. Try to keep your cat isolated until you have taken them to the vet.

What is the survival rate for cats that get this condition?

Unfortunately, infection carries a very high mortality rate, particularly in young kittens.

What is the treatment for this condition?

Unfortunately, this condition is difficult to treat and is highly contagious.

I can't keep stray cats from getting into my backyard, and I live in the Christies Beach area – what should I do to protect my cat?

If your cat is fully vaccinated, they will be protected from infection. Make sure your cat's vaccinations are up to date – and if you have a young kitten, make sure to contain them indoors until they are 4 months old.