



# 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 mild-to severe 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 PET

#### Species

- Cats
- People

#### Mean Age and Range

- Usually kittens under 1 year of age; any age cat possible

### SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES IN THE PET

- Cat may be infected but have no signs of disease (known as a “subclinical infection”)
- Clinical disease usually develops if the cat 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, usually progresses to involve 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

- *Chlamydophila felis*

## RISK FACTORS

- Simultaneous infections with other respiratory disease-causing agents (such as viruses)
- Lack of vaccination
- Multicat 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
- Cats kept housed in cat colonies, shelters, or breeding catteries (where numerous cats are housed together)—all cat may have to be treatment; treatment may have to be continued for as long as 6 weeks

### 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 is the antibiotic of choice; doxycycline
- Antibiotics applied to the eye directly (topical treatment)—eye ointments containing 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 clinical disease; 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 a 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 clinical disease; vaccines do not prevent infection
- Tends to be a long-term (chronic) disease, lasting for several weeks or months, unless successful antibiotic treatment is given
- Clinical disease only develops if the cat has a simultaneous infection by other disease-causing agents (such as viruses)
- *Chlamydophila felis* can infect people, especially those with poor immune systems (immunocompromised)

## Notes

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