

# Prevalence of Retroviruses in Feline Oral Disease Cases

Jan Bellows, DVM, DAVIDC, DABVP<sup>1</sup>, Jessica L. Lachtara<sup>2</sup>

1. Hometown Animal Hospital and Dental Clinic, Weston, FL USA  
2. IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., Westbrook, ME USA

## Purpose

A study was conducted to determine the prevalence of feline immunodeficiency virus and feline leukemia virus in feline oral disease patients.

## Methodology

- Private veterinary practitioners were recruited to test feline patients that presented with oral disease.
- The IDEXX SNAP<sup>®</sup> FIV/FelV Combo Test was used to test this cat population from January through April 2006.
- Results were returned by fax for analysis.
- Prevalence was calculated as the percentage of positive test results reported out of the population of cats with oral disease tested.

## Results

- A total of 8,982 orally diseased cats were screened. Presenting cases included cats with plaque, calculus, gingivitis, periodontal disease, feline odontoclastic resorption lesions, gingivostomatitis and other oral diseases as defined by the practitioner.
- Of 8,982 cats tested, 1,276 were retrovirus-positive, a 14.2% prevalence (Figure 1).
- Cats with gingivitis and stomatitis exhibited 14.3% and 23.9% prevalence of retroviral infection, respectively (Figure 2).

## Discussion

Recent studies reported the prevalence of FeLV nationwide as 3.3%, and the prevalence of FIV as 3.4%.<sup>1</sup> In this study, the higher prevalence of retroviral infection in orally diseased cats indicates that almost one of every seven cats with oral disease has a retroviral infection. This study suggests screening cats with oral disease for retroviral infection to help understand and treat the multifactorial underlying causes.

FIV- and FeLV-infected cats often present vague, subtle signs of illness, but once a cat has been identified with one of these diseases, the veterinarian and the pet owner can work together to deliver proper care for the cat. The potential correlation in cats between oral disease and immune systems that are suppressed by FIV or FeLV gives veterinarians valuable new information in their efforts to fight these contagious viruses.

Figure 1

### Orally Diseased Cats

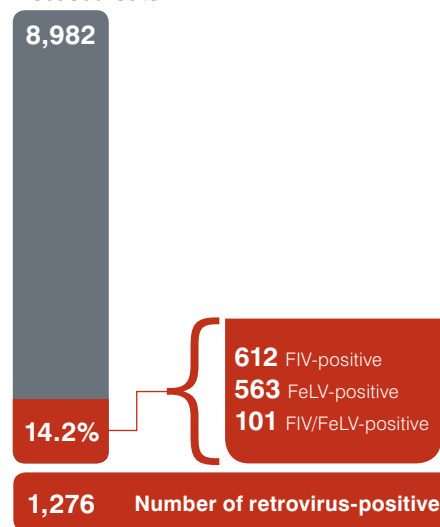


Figure 2

### Cats with gingivitis



### Cats with stomatitis



**IDEXX**  
LABORATORIES

idexx.com

1. Levy JK, Crawford PC, Brien JL. Prevalence of FIV and FeLV in the United States. Proceedings from: Seventh International Feline Retrovirus Research Symposium; September 11–15, 2004; Pisa, Italy.