

Feline Coronavirus (FCoV) PCR Testing

ABOUT: Feline coronavirus (FCoV) is common in multi-cat households and shelters. Most infections are mild or asymptomatic, but in some cases the virus mutates into feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), a fatal disease.

SYMPTOMS: Diarrhea, soft stools, or mild intestinal upset. If progressing to FIP: persistent fever, abdominal or chest fluid buildup, weight loss, jaundice, or neurological signs.

PREVENTION: Maintain good litter hygiene and reduce crowding in multi-cat homes. No effective vaccine exists in most regions.

GETTING TESTED: PCR identifies FCoV in fecal samples.

- Preferred specimen: 5 grams feces in a 10 mL ear notch tube.
- Handling & Shipping: Collect fresh stool directly (not from litterbox if possible). Keep refrigerated (2-8 °C) until shipping. Package with absorbent wrap, leakproof zip bag, and ship overnight with ice packs that are separated from the samples by paper towels. Do not freeze. A positive PCR result confirms shedding of FCoV in feces, indicates infection, and potential risk of transmission, though not all infections progress to FIP. Negative results indicate no FCoV RNA detected and suggests absence of infection or non-shedding at the time of collection. Intermittent shedding can occur; repeat testing may be recommended if suspicion is high.

FCoV PCR tests are processed and results reported on Wednesday.

