



## Upper Respiratory Infections

Here at the AWLA, we do many things to keep the animals in our care healthy and happy during their stay with us. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, our cats may come down with an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI). Even the cleanest, most modern shelters encounter URIs for some of the following reasons:

- Stress. Coming to an animal shelter is always stressful for our animals: it isn't easy to adjust to losing their familiar home and family, and finding themselves caged in a room with many unfamiliar animals. Stress leaves animals (and people) vulnerable to infection and disease.
- Lack of Previous Vaccination. Most of our cats come to us without having been recently vaccinated against upper respiratory viruses. Even though we vaccinate our cats right after they arrive here, it would be much easier for them to fight off an illness if they had received regular vaccinations.
- Air-borne Transmission. Respiratory infections are highly transmissible among animals and people who share a common air space for prolonged periods of time. Think of how often you become ill after after a family member or co-worker has a bad cold.

At the AWLA, we do many things to try to prevent as well as control URI in our cats.

- ✓ We vaccinate all cats and kittens on arrival against the major URI viruses. We use a vaccine that is administered in the nose, as well as one that is injected under the skin (we follow protocol established through the Shelter Medicine program at UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine).
- ✓ We supplement the cats' food with L-Lysine, a supplement which boosts the immune system.
- ✓ Our cats' housing, litter boxes, bowls, beds, and toys are *thoroughly* cleaned, disinfected and/or replaced every day, and we are careful to always wash our hands after every cat we handle.
- ✓ When a cat or kitten develops URI symptoms, he or she is moved to our isolation room, and we begin a treatment protocol suggested by one of our area veterinarians.

It is possible, despite all of our efforts, that your new cat may come down with a URI after arriving home with you. It is very important to have your cat seen promptly by a veterinarian if you observe wet sneezing, fever, and/or lack of appetite; your veterinarian can recommend a treatment plan to ease the symptoms and speed your new cat's recovery.

Supportive home care can be very important for cats with URI. As is true when people have a cold, cats who are congested and cannot smell their food may not feel like eating. Encouraging your cat to eat is the most important thing you can do to help him or her recover; try fishy canned cat food, meat flavors of baby food, canned tuna, or anything that will tempt his appetite while his nose is stuffed. Cats who are suffering from URI can look and feel pathetic (just as we do when we have a cold); but typically recover with rest and good care. Your veterinarian will guide you with the medical care, and we will be glad to help with advice on the home supportive care and TLC.