

## **BREEDERS & VETERINARY SEMINAR**

**12th May 2007**

**Report on the NBA Seminar  
Speakers on FIP:**

**Dr Susan Little  
Dr Danielle Gunn-Moore  
Dr Leslie Lyons  
Prof Tim Gruffydd-Jones**

**Dr Susan Little DVM opened the seminar focusing on FIP and the breeder. She began by explaining various terminologies that would be used and then went on to explain about the disease and the condition in more detail. She explained about the mutation process and the minimal risks that infected cats pose to others in the cattery. Once the disease has mutated beyond the FECV it is no longer considered high risk in terms of contamination between sufferers and other cats in the cattery. She went on to say that most catteries would experience a loss of less than 10% of cats to FIP even though 80 – 90% of the cats could be infected with FECV. The actual percentage figures were unknown as much of the data in this area is currently not collated, but one would not expect to see thousands of young cats dying from FIP.**

**She explained the risk factors surrounding FIP and the degree of heritability that may exist. It is widely believed that FIP requires the existence of three predisposers, the virus, a stressor and a weakened or compromised immune system in the cat. It is possible that weakened immunity may be an inherited quality. Consideration therefore should be given to removing cats from the breeding program that have shown to have high susceptibility to disease. She then went on to explain more about shedding patterns of FECV and control measures to reduce cross infection. This included regular cleaning and sanitation of litter trays and removal of litter at regular intervals. The method of early weaning and isolation of kittens born to FECV positive queens was discussed. In this situation kittens are weaned at about 4 weeks of age, removed from the positive queen and kept away until they are rehomed at normal age range. The clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment of FIP was also discussed in some depth. Finally mention was made of vaccination of animals explaining that the vaccine had engendered much controversy surrounding its use and efficacy.**

**Dr Danielle Gunn-Moore spoke about control in catteries. Each cat run should be treated as a mini universe, completely isolated from other cat runs. She also expanded on the earlier presentation by Dr Little. The main impact of Dr Gunn-Moore's presentation was the 'visible sparkles' emanating from the rear of a cat. These sparkles were meant to represent the transmission of the virus by many means other than just fecal transfer.**

**It is possible for a case of flatulence to cause the issue of thousands of viral spores into the air. Transfer could also take place from cat to blanket, scratching post, litter scoop and dustpan and brush. Although many breeders take great care about the litter trays, similar care should be taken regarding scoops, scratching posts, blankets, toys etc that the cat has access to. This caused a great deal of feedback and debate. She went on to look at attempts to eradicate FCoV from catteries using negative control groups and moving cats between these groups depending on their state. This type of control can be successful in some cases but some cats are persistent shedders and will never self heal. Consideration should then be given to rehoming these cats. She explained about low stock density to reduce stress. She mentioned the formula of 1 litter tray per cat plus 1, and their siting to minimise cross infection. Some catteries use different coloured trays for different areas of the cattery, so it becomes clear if one tray is accidentally sited in the wrong area. Mention was made of quarantine and suspension of breeding following any infections. Quarantine was really a measure of separating new cats and kittens into confirmed negative groupings in the cattery until you were sure that they were all free from any viral infections. Suspension of breeding should be considered for a period of six months following any infections. This would allow for all cats to self heal or give you the chance to identify the persistent shedders and isolate them from the breeding program. The cattery should be treated with care if the desire was to reduce the possibility of cross infection. Again mention was made of vaccination possibilities with reservations.**

**Dr Leslie Lyons PhD spoke more about the research on FIP especially at UC Davis. She went on to examine the crazy cat lady and attitudes about cats. She made mention again of more reinforcement of good house keeping and control. Her talk then centred around genetics and the susceptibility to infection and to FIP. It was also considered good practice for breeders and owners to capture buchal swabs from all animals and store them safely in individual envelopes with cat details on the outside. Owners were encouraged to keep their own library of swabs and submit them to UC Davis in the event of any disease being discovered. She also mentioned the benefits of having samples prior to research funding. These swabs would become the foundation of the sample library and help in building the library and of course support any requests for funding into various research areas. She then mentioned new research programs that UC Davis are now funding for and hoped to present more details in the coming months.**

**Prof Tim Gruffydd-Jones BVetMed PhD MRCVS then presented details of new research being carried out at Bristol. He explained that FIP, while rare is one of the last scourges of the cat community, with the possible exception of Feline Immune Deficiency Virus (FIV). We as cat breeders are very concerned that research into this disease continues. Much of the ongoing research being done into FIP is in the USA. While this makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about FCoV in general, it is insufficient for our**

**practical needs in the UK. We need to ensure research into FCoV and FIPV is supported in the UK for two reasons.**

**Firstly; on the basis of in vitro neutralization tests FCoVs can be allocated to serotypes: type I is prevalent in Europe and found in most fatal cases of FIP, type II may be more common in other parts of the world (e.g., US, Japan). The latter type II viruses are a showcase of viral evolution - they arise in animals through RNA recombination, during which genetic information from the canine coronavirus is incorporated into the feline coronavirus type I genomes. They can be readily created in the laboratory, whilst type I is still resistant to that creative process. This means that any tests or materials developed to the Type II virus are of little use in countries which do not have this strain of virus. There has been a vaccine developed to Type II virus Primucell (Pfizer Ltd), however it is in limited demand in the UK, due to its poor expected efficacy (similarly, any diagnostic tests to the Type II virus are likely to have poor detection efficiency for Type I virus).**

**Secondly, there is currently no one single simple test for FIP, as a consequence many valued and beloved animals are being lost to it and we need to conduct basic research into FIP to improve on existing or develop new treatments. Therefore, we would like to see resolutions to some of these ongoing issues. We urgently need to raise funds in this country (UK) to continue valuable research which is being carried out by expert veterinary practitioners in the field.**

**Why?**

**Funding bodies already short of funds are less likely to provide financing for what is seen as a minority disease concern We need to conduct vital basic research on the Type I virus we have in this country, for vaccine development and possibly new or improved treatments We need diagnostic tests to detect Type I FIPV in contact, or other cats at an early stage, which would, we hope, lead to appropriate and timely treatment of infected cats with existing therapies. We need an education program to give guidelines on appropriate and improved management of FCoV infected contact or FIPV infected cats by the veterinary and general community and dispel the myths. We propose to raise money for two main lines of research, (i) to develop a test for FIPV based on detection of the viral protein in urine samples, (ii) to establish methodologies to grow the Type I virus in the laboratory with a view to development of vaccines and better treatments. What would this achieve? If we can identify FIPv at an early stage, there may be a possibility of curing the disease with drugs like Interferon. Also it would ensure that only FIPv positive cats were treated in this way and that other cats with similar clinical signs and symptoms but not actually suffering from FIP could be treated for the correct disease. It would also hopefully reduce the number of cats `euthanased by misdiagnosis. One other area that needs expansion that may well cause deep concern amongst**

**all the cat lovers here is the requirement for access to live animals currently suffering from suspected FIP. I am happy to expand on this but in individual emails to reduce the possible controversial aspects of the proposals. Email address: raymondwigley@gmail.com**

**There were two other talks on the day:**

**Vicky Hall, Cat Behaviourist Consultant. Vicky gave a very amusing but thought provoking talk on the dependence of the cat on its owner and also the other way around. Our interaction in everything the cat does, can affect the cat to the point that it can become withdrawn, especially where constant intervention into the cats normal actions is concerned. Case histories were used to demonstrate this. Most of the delegates and other speakers were able to identify with some of the scenarios that Vicky identified as causing behaviour problems in cats, especially when it came to holidays and the perception that 'no-one can look after our cats the way we do'.**

**Anatoli Krassavine Toly gave a short presentation on how to get the best photographs of our cats, by using simple but effective props, and how to set up your equipment. He also gave some ideas and showed examples of how to crop and digitally change photographs to give very interesting and unusual compositions.**