

Dr. Kim's feline mews



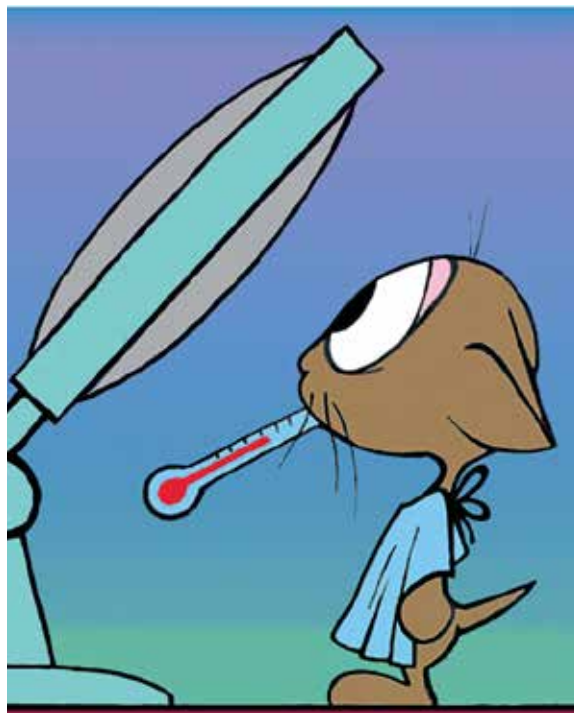
Phone: 0400 756 331

What does a SICK CAT look like?

Felis catus is in an interesting niche. Highly evolved as hypercarnivores and hunters of small prey, the original cat lived alone - you only share your mouse with your kitten after all.

However, they are also small enough to be prey themselves, so there is every chance that a cat slowed by sickness is going to be consumed by something further up the food chain. Cats are prey for owls, hawks, foxes and dogs (in general of course!). So, as soon as they feel vulnerable, cats either hide, or hide their signs of illness, even from their owners. Zoo keepers are much more useful at detecting illness in their charges than the zoo vet could ever be with tests and interventions, and that is one of the reasons zoo keepers tend to stay for a long time in their positions - they need to know every individual and its habits. **And a cat "is still only a whisker away from the wilds"** (Poet Jean Burden) so the same applies for your tiger-on-the-hearth.

The key to identifying illness is to notice **CHANGE**. A variation from what your feline friend does normally. More of one thing, less of another. Cats don't lie (except lie down!) but they will conceal a problem. Drinking more, eating less. Using the tray - more, or less. Playing less, grumpy or sore somewhere. Clingy or more distant.



Visible signs - vomiting (why is it ALWAYS on the carpet? Traction perhaps?). Diarrhoea. Blood from anywhere. Licking more (especially their back end - cats won't usually do their private toilette in view). Hair falling out in patches. Scratching (ears usually) or 'rippling skin'. **CHANGE** is the key.

Your feline friend mirrors you in many ways. The range of illnesses - from alopecia to arthritis, colds to cancer, diarrhoea to diabetes and more - occur in them too. The most common sign or symptom in a cat though, is

lethargy - doing less, concealing more, conserving energy for recovery and repair. Owners frequently bring their cat to Dr Kim because something is 'not quite right'. You know your pet best - if you are worried, there is probably something awry. And a vet visit in time, saves nine - lives!

For extra reading see The American Association of Feline Practitioner (Dr Kim is a contributing member). It has an article called 10 Subtle Signs of Sickness in Cats.