



## **Upper Respiratory Infections in Cats**

### **What is it?**

In a typical shelter, many cats are taken in every day, some of which have never received proper health care, and many of who are already carrying infectious diseases. Some cats show no signs of illness. Upper respiratory infection or URI is the cat equivalent of a human cold or flu infection, and this disease often affects cats and kittens. It is “species specific”; therefore, it cannot infect humans but can infect other felines.

### **How is it prevented?**

The Bay Area Humane Society vaccinates against these infectious diseases as soon as the felines enter the shelter. Vaccines may take up to two weeks to provide protection from disease and do not protect if the animal was exposed to the disease prior to being inoculated.

### **What are the symptoms of URI?**

In cats and kittens, the signs of feline URI may include sneezing, fever, runny nose, red or watery eyes, nasal congestion (often seen as drooling or open-mouthed breathing), ulcers on tongue, lips, nose, or roof of mouth. Lack of appetite or thirst, and lack of energy is other symptoms of URI.

### **How is it treated?**

If your cat develops URI, seek veterinary care as soon as possible (immediately for kittens that stop eating and drinking). A veterinarian can usually treat feline URI easily. However, without treatment, URI can severely debilitate a cat or kitten and even lead to more serious conditions such as pneumonia, bronchitis or sinus infections. Felines with unvaccinated backgrounds and adjusting to a shelter or new home environment are under stress, possibly making them more susceptible to this illness. Follow the veterinarian’s instructions closely and use all medications as prescribed. Isolate the sick feline from your other cats. Provide lots of love and care and be patient, your new companion will be ready join in your family activities soon.