



# Acute diarrhoea

Guidance for cat carers



The information below is to guide Cats Protection employees and volunteers when caring for a Cats Protection cat with acute diarrhoea. [Guidance for vets](#) can be found within the protocol section of the website, as can our [guidance for the approach to chronic diarrhoea](#). A table on the environmental management of specific infectious agents is in the guidance for both cat carers and veterinary professionals; treatments are within the vet guidance only.

In the shelter environment, acute (sudden onset) diarrhoea is often caused by stress, but changes in diet and overfeeding are also common causes. Infectious causes of diarrhoea can include:

- roundworms or tapeworms
- protozoa such as Coccidia and Giardia
- viral causes such as feline parvovirus
- bacterial causes such as Salmonella and Campylobacter

Infectious diarrhoea may be the result of an existing infectious disease or a reactivated disease, where stress has affected a cat's immune system and ability to fight off or control disease. Some infectious causes of diarrhoea are zoonotic (meaning they may be passed from the cat to a person) so particular attention to hygiene for these cats should be made including using barrier nursing and appropriate infectious waste disposal where necessary.

Other causes of diarrhoea which may lead to more chronic disease include, but are not limited to, food allergies, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, disorders of the pancreas, kidney disease, liver disease, hyperthyroidism, drug reactions and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)/feline leukaemia virus (FeLV). Please see our separate handout 'Chronic diarrhoea guidelines for vets'.

If an otherwise healthy cat has three consecutive episodes of diarrhoea (faeces are grade two or below as described in the Cats Protection Faeces Grading Chart), monitor the cat closely and start the Diarrhoea Monitoring Chart (below). When using the Diarrhoea Monitoring Chart there is no need to also record observations on the standard Cats Protection observation chart.

### **When to contact the vet**

a. The cat is unwell:

- the cat is showing other signs of illness, for example vomiting, coughing, sneezing
- the cat is depressed
- the cat is very underweight
- the cat has a reduced appetite

b. The cat is on medication for another condition or has another condition.

c. The cat is on a special diet for reasons other than a sensitive stomach or obesity.

d. The cat is under eight weeks old.

e. The acute diarrhoea has not resolved within five days, or there is a relapse after weaning the cat back onto normal food.

### **Initial management of diarrhoea in weaned cats and kittens**

Please refer to the Diarrhoea Flowchart on page five.

- a. Give five days of fenbendazole wormer (for example Panacur) at 50 mg/kg (if using paste, the dose is one graduation, as marked on the syringe/described in the instructions, per kilogram of bodyweight. Check dosing with the vet). Still give this five-day course if the cat has had a course of fenbendazole as part of routine deworming. If the cat is in the middle of a three-day course of treatment, extend it to five days.
- b. Give up to seven days of our preferred probiotic (½ sachet daily for adults, a ‘pinch’ daily for kittens and mix into the food well).
- c. Feed at least three small meals a day of a wet or dry commercial intestinal (sensitivity-type) diet as per manufacturer’s recommendations and cat preference.

**One of the following commercial diets should be chosen:**

- Purina Proplan EN gastrointestinal (suitable for kittens)
- Hills i/d (provides complete balanced nutrition for adult cats and for growing kittens and is suitable for long-term feeding)
- Royal Canin Gastrointestinal (kitten version available)
- Hills GI Biome

Record all observations on the Diarrhoea Monitoring Chart (below). The vet will need this information if the cat does not respond to this initial stage of diarrhoea management.

**How to wean back to normal food after the diarrhoea improves**

Day one: Feed  $\frac{3}{4}$  intestinal diet,  $\frac{1}{4}$  normal

Day two and three: Feed  $\frac{1}{2}$  intestinal diet,  $\frac{1}{2}$  normal

Day four and five: Feed  $\frac{1}{4}$  intestinal diet,  $\frac{3}{4}$  normal

Day six: Feed normal food and normal number of meals

If no improvement is seen after five days or, if at any time, the cat meets any of the criteria in the ‘When to contact the vet’ section above, please ensure the cat is seen by the vet.

Continue using the Diarrhoea Monitoring Chart (below) until the cat sees the vet.

Bring a fresh faecal sample or a photo of the faeces to the exam as well as the Diarrhoea Monitoring Chart.

## How to collect a faecal sample

If possible, collect a small amount of faeces (fingertip sized or larger) into a sterile container, once a day for three days. The faeces can be mixed, this is known as a 'pooled' faecal sample (due to some infectious agents not being continuously shed into faeces, this gives the best chance of detecting the infection).

Store in an airtight container in a fridge while collecting the sample. Ensure it is separate from any food products.

Ensure no litter is contained within the sample.

Blood and mucous can be included, and it can be of benefit to include this alongside the faeces.

## Results of testing

Key points

- Our recommended faecal test is Finn Laboratories FAO3
- If feline parvovirus is suspected or confirmed, please contact [veterinary@cats.org.uk](mailto:veterinary@cats.org.uk) urgently. Further guidance on feline parvovirus is available here: <https://www.cats.org.uk/media/1432/feline-parvovirus-fpv-procedures.pdf>
- If a zoonotic cause is identified (which can pass from cat to human), please contact your Field Veterinary Officer for further advice.
- Detecting an infectious agent does not always mean this is the cause of the diarrhoea. However, cats in a shelter setting are more likely to develop symptoms of infection
- Good litter tray hygiene with prompt disposal of faeces, use of disposable litter trays, and keeping the area around the cat's bottom as clean as possible (bathe with a chlorhexidine shampoo), especially with infectious diarrhoea to minimise environmental contamination
- Do not retest once the cat is well and no longer has diarrhoea.
- Please remember to give owners the [zoonotic diarrhoea handout](#) when appropriate.

## Environmental management

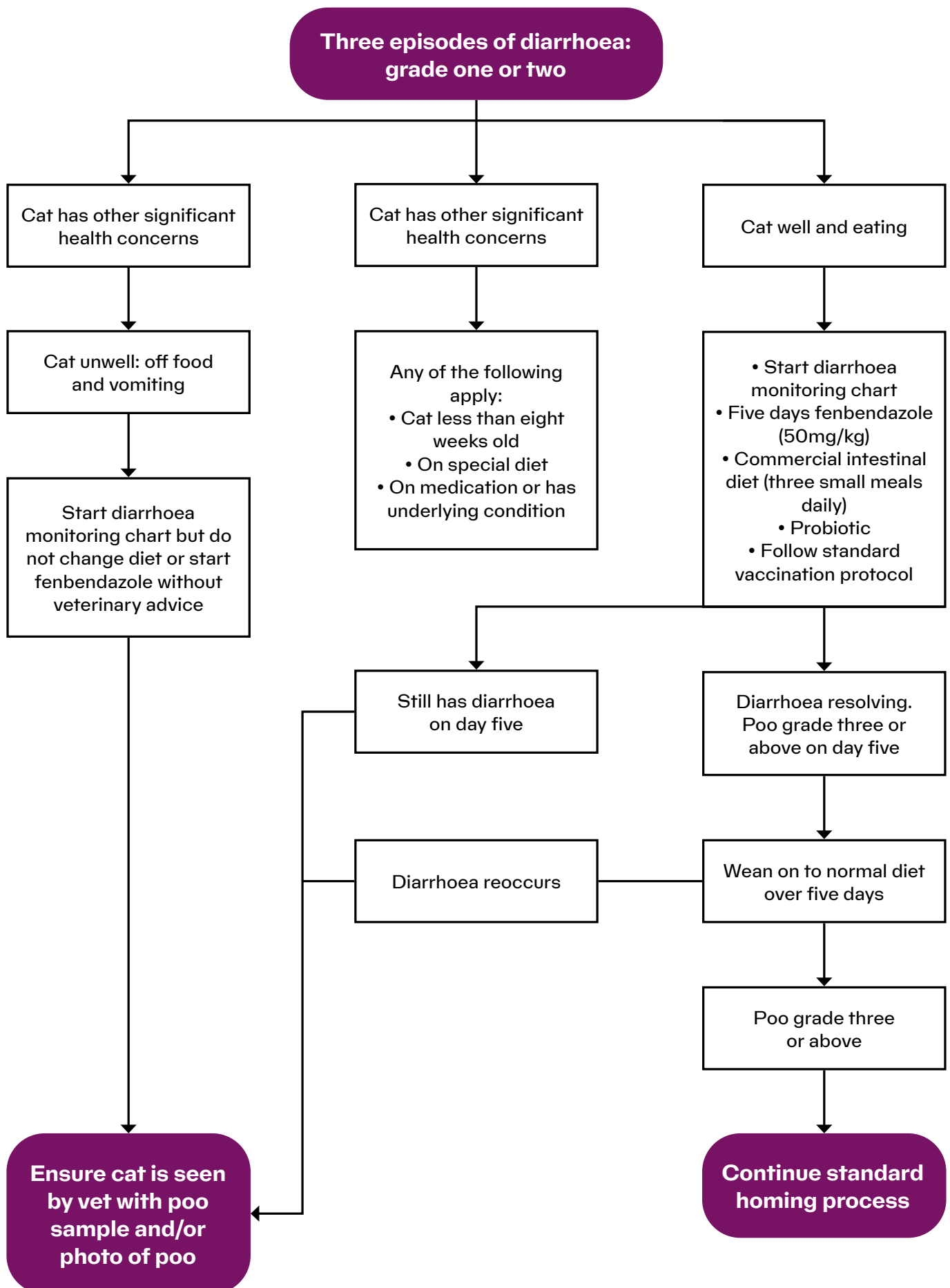
All cases where infectious diarrhoea is diagnosed or suspected:

- barrier nurse
- clean last
- use disposable litter trays when possible
- see individual disease instructions in the Acute diarrhoea: Management of specific diseases table below

## Acute diarrhoea: Management of specific diseases

Pathogen	Environmental control	Zoonotic /home with zoonotic diarrhoea handout
Giardia spp	Bleach 1:32 dilution. Allow area to dry fully. Use boiling water for litter trays and food bowls	Yes
Cystisporia spp	Anigene 1:100 dilution + 5-minute contact time. Steam cleaner to kill cysts in environment after each deep clean if possible/once pen empty	No
Cryptosporidium spp	Anigene 1:100 dilution + 5-minute contact time. Steam cleaner to kill cysts in environment after each deep clean if possible/once pen empty	Yes
Tritrichomonas foetus	Bleach 1:32 dilution. Allow area to dry fully. Use boiling water for litter trays and food bowls	No
Campylobacter spp	Anigene 1:100 dilution + 5-minute contact time	Yes
Clostridium spp	Anigene 1:100 dilution + 5-minute contact time	No
Salmonella spp	Anigene 1:100 dilution + 5-minute contact time	Yes

# Acute diarrhoea flowchart



# Poo grading chart

<b>Grade one</b>	Liquid, watery faeces
<b>Grade two</b>	Mostly unformed stools, water faeces with lumps
<b>Grade three</b>	Approximately 50% formed stools in softer stools
<b>Grade four</b>	Mostly formed stools with a very small amount of softer stool
<b>Grade five</b>	All firm, well-formed stools
<b>Grade six</b>	Small, very hard faecal pellets

# Diarrhoea monitoring chart

- Start this chart after three episodes of grade one or two faeces are noted. Use one chart per litter of kittens in a pen.
- If the cat is on medication or a prescription diet then please ensure the cat is seen by your vet.
- If the cat becomes unwell such as decreasing appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea worsening, then please ensure the cat is seen by your vet.
- Please note that the grey boxes in the table means no entry needs to be made into these for those days indicated.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Cat-a-log number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cat's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Cats age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date last wormed: \_\_\_\_\_

Any medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Prescription diet: \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Diarrhoea description				Weight (kg)	Name of food offered and state wet or dry	Eaten (Y/N)	Drinking (approx. ml/day)	Vomiting (Y/N)	Fenben dazole given (Y/N)	Probiotic given (Y/N)
	Colour	Blood or mucus (B/M)	Grade (1-6)	Frequency per day							
1							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
2							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
3							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
4							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
5							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
6							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				
7							am:				
							mid:				
							pm:				





[cats.org.uk](https://cats.org.uk)

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