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### **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) In Cats**

Gabby got her name because of her talkative nature. She is a loving, affectionate 11 year old tabby cat. She is in excellent health aside from her FIV positive status. Gabby was very lucky that she was taken in by a family that was knowledgeable about FIV who were not afraid to give her a home. Gabby is thriving and being pampered along with the other cats that she shares her home with. Gabby lives like a queen, she has her family wrapped around her paw.

People are often hesitant to consider adopting an FIV positive cat due to a lack of education about the condition. Many cats with FIV are not as fortunate as Gabby and they end up living out their lives in sanctuaries or are euthanized. We hope that the following information will provide people with the facts about FIV and help to eradicate the stigma that has been created around this virus. We believe that if people become more informed about FIV, more people open their hearts and homes to cats with FIV.

In 1986, the state of California found a new virus in the domestic cat. Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is a retrovirus, with the same family as Feline Leukemia Virus (FELV) but it is a very different virus in composition and causes of the disease. It is species specific to domestic felines, however, big cats, such as lions, tigers, snow leopards and others can get a unique type of FIV as well. In the United States alone, at least 1-3% of healthy cats have it.

FIV attacks the immune system in the cat. The primary mode of transmission is from 'deep' bite wounds from serious fights. The virus is transmitted when the saliva of an FIV positive cat enters a deep bite wound of an uninfected cat.

Unlike previously believed, cats that have FIV don't transmit the virus to other cats around them through typical daily activities such as grooming, sharing food or water bowls, playing and use of litter pans. Gabby lives with four other cats that do not have FIV. She enjoys bossing around the other cats but she never harms them. Also, a mother cat doesn't pass FIV to her kittens. This was recently published in a study, The Vet Journal by Dr. Annette L. Litster of Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine. Many cats and kittens have lost their lives due to FIV because of the lack in knowledge of the virus. FIV will not survive out of a host for more than a few hours. It also does not cross mucous membranes very easily.

Even cats with FIV, can make great pets. No need to fear this virus as once thought. While FIV does damage the immune system making it difficult to fight a common infection, it doesn't need to make the cat unadoptable. These cats can lead active, full and wonderful lives in loving homes. If the public's understanding of FIV improves and people become more open to adopting an FIV positive cat, more cats like Gabby can brighten the lives of the families that adopt them.