

# FELINE LEISHMANIOSIS

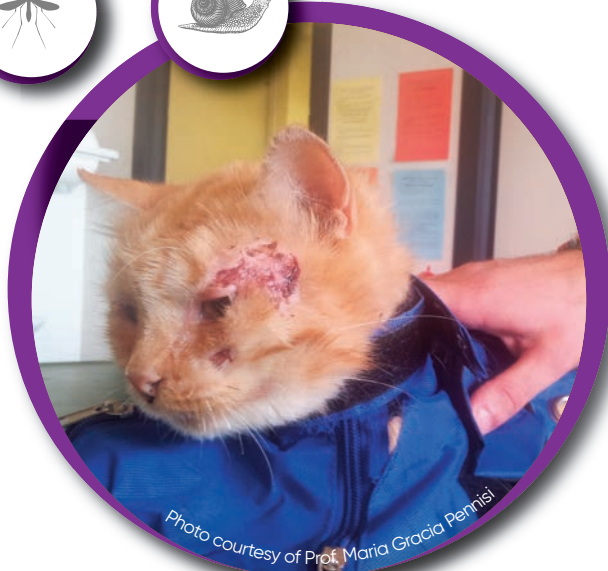


Photo courtesy of Prof. Maria Gracia Pennisi

## LEISHMANIA INFANTUM

- Leishmaniosis is a zoonosis caused by *Leishmania infantum*, an intracellular protozoan parasite.
- Vectors of the disease in Europe are sand flies of the genus *Phlebotomus*. The parasites are transmitted through the haematophagous activities of female phlebotome sand flies.
- Cats may act as a reservoir.

### When to suspect infection?

Most infected cats show no clinical symptoms. Infection is more widespread than clinical disease.

### Clinical signs

- Lymphadenomegaly (over 50% of cases)
- Skin lesions (eg. nodules, crusts or ulcers), mostly in the face and ears, pododermatitis (25-50% of cases)
- Granulomatous stomatitis (25-50% of cases)
- Mucocutaneous lesions (<25% of cases)
- Hepatosplenomegaly (< 25% of cases, associated with increased mortality)

### Clinical pathology

- Hyperglobulinaemia (>50% of cases)
- Mild to moderate non regenerative anemia (25-50% of cases)
- Hypoalbuminemia (<25% of cases)
- Leukocytosis/leukopenia (<25% of cases)
- Proteinuria (<25% of cases)

### Origin

- Globally reported but found more frequently in Mediterranean countries.

### How can it be confirmed?

- **Cytology/histopathology**, from cutaneous lesions, lymph node or bone marrow.
- **Quantitative serology (IFAT/ELISA)**: most cats with clinical signs have low to very high antibody titers. A negative result does not rule out the disease.
- **PCR**, for the detection of parasite DNA in blood samples (low sensitivity), biopsy samples from bone marrow, skin or lymph node tissue.

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Photo courtesy of Prof. Gad Baneth

## Disease management

- Most drugs against *Leishmania infantum* have been studied in dogs. Limited experience with canine treatment protocols in cats.
- The disease can be self limiting.
- Allopurinol 10-20 mg/kg q12-24 h (recommended by the European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases-ABCD).

## FELINE LEISHMANIOSIS

## Prevention

- Use of species-approved sand fly repellents (collars containing 10% imidacloprid and 4.5% flumethrin).
- Keep cats indoors from sunset till dawn during the sand fly season (April to November) and use physical barriers on windows to keep sand flies away.
- Treat any infected cohabiting dog.

## Zoonotic potential

- Protection of cats probably needed for the regional control of *L. Infantum* infection.

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