

## Management of feline chronic gingivostomatitis (FCGS):

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### What is feline chronic gingivostomatitis (FCGS)?

Feline chronic gingivostomatitis (FCGS) occurs in cats and can be ***a particularly painful disease***. It's a very difficult disease to manage and involves a lot of commitment from both owners and veterinarians.

FCGS can occur in any breed of cat, even domestic short hair cats; it can affect 0.7% to 10% of the general cat population, whilst mainly seen in middle aged to older cats. The disease involves marked redness and ulceration of the gum tissues, which spreads to the rest of the mouth. It can include inside the cheeks and at the back of the mouth.

The exact cause of gingivostomatitis is, at present, unknown, but it may be due to multiple causes involving bacteria and viruses and possibly other causes, such as food allergies.

Symptoms are often associated with pain. The affected cat will often be reluctant to eat or have difficulty eating food, have a poor coat due to lack of grooming, experience weight loss and tend not to socialise within the rest of the household. The disease also causes marked halitosis (bad breath) and excess salivation.

### Key points:

1. Chronic gingivostomatitis may be due to severe gum disease (periodontal disease).
2. Certain bacteria and viruses have been incriminated in this disease, but, at present, the causative agent(s) has not been identified. It has been shown to be more prevalent in multi-cat households, suggesting that stress may also play a role in the disease, by affecting the cat's immune system or through the awakening of dormant viruses.
3. Redness and inflammation in the back of the mouth, can carry with it a poorer outcome.
4. Treatment often involves both surgery and medical management.
5. The disease may also be associated with other diseases, such as stomach and bowel problems.

### Diagnostic tests required for FCGS:

1. Examination of the mouth under general anaesthesia is necessary due to the level of pain and discomfort in the conscious animal.
2. Complete oral examination, including gum probing and dental radiographs, is essential to formulate a management plan and to rule out other diseases.
3. Viral testing should be performed (to rule out certain viruses) as well as blood tests prior to any treatment.
4. Gum biopsy samples are helpful to determine the underlying disease processes and to rule out other diseases.

### Management:

1. *The aim of management of FCGS is to control the redness and pain to a manageable level without always achieving complete remission.*

2. Frequent removal of plaque and tartar (calculus) is essential. If the disease is mild, based on gum probing and dental radiographs, introducing an intensive homecare program, consisting either of daily toothbrushing, or the use of Chlorhexidine gluconate wiped onto the teeth every day, can help. Three to six monthly professional cleans under general anaesthesia may also be required as part of the management of this disease.
3. A course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications may be required as part of a comprehensive management plan.
4. Usually affected cats require extraction of their premolar and molar teeth (Partial mouth extractions or PME). Where severe gum redness involves the canine and incisor teeth, then full mouth extractions (FME) are considered appropriate management.
5. Management also involves regular rechecks to assess improvement or the need for further treatment.



*Figure 1: A cat showing very inflamed gum tissue due to FCGS.*



*Figure 2: Redness in back of mouth (Caudal stomatitis). Note enlarged tonsils also*



*Figure 3: Post-surgical photograph showing complete extractions of premolar and molar teeth.*



*Figure 4: Post procedural intraoral x-ray showing complete extractions of premolars and molar from right upper jaw.*