

**Gastrointestinal Disorders**

FELINE CHRONIC ENTEROPATHY

Chronic enteropathy refers to gastrointestinal (GI) disease with clinical signs lasting longer than 3 weeks in the absence of identified enteropathogens, parasites, non-GI disorders (e.g., renal disease, hyperthyroidism), persistent foreign bodies and/or toxin exposure, or neoplasia.¹⁻⁴



Feline chronic enteropathy encompasses food-responsive enteropathy, which includes both food allergy and food intolerance; antibiotic-responsive enteropathy; immunosuppressant-responsive enteropathy (i.e., steroid-responsive enteropathy or inflammatory bowel disease); and alimentary small cell lymphoma.^{3,5-7}

Cats with chronic enteropathy – regardless of the final diagnosis – may present with any combination of GI clinical signs.^{3,5,8,9} The most common clinical sign in cats with chronic enteropathy is weight loss, followed by vomiting, changes in appetite and diarrhea.^{3,4,9-11} Cats with food-responsive enteropathy (which is covered in more detail separately) may present more frequently with diarrhea as the chief complaint.^{5,9,12}

Diet modification may be an important first step in the management of cats with chronic enteropathy. Nutritional intervention should provide adequate nutrients to meet cats' nutritional requirements, make up for any nutrient losses through the GI tract, and help manage clinical signs.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Diarrhea is the main clinical sign of chronic enteropathy in dogs^{13,14} and people¹⁵ but is less common in cats. Weight loss, decreased appetite and vomiting are the primary clinical signs of chronic enteropathy in cats.^{3,4}

Key Messages

- Common nutritional strategies for managing cats with chronic enteropathy include dietary modifications, vitamin B12 supplementation (when indicated), and administration of probiotics to help address dysbiosis and reduce mucosal inflammation.^{3,7}
- Cats with chronic enteropathy should be fed a highly digestible, palatable, high-protein formula to minimize lean body mass loss, manage impaired digestion and/or absorption of macronutrients (e.g., protein, fat or carbohydrate), and/or address dysbiosis.
 - Unlike dogs, most cats with chronic enteropathy do not need a fat-restricted diet.¹⁶
 - Commercial therapeutic gastrointestinal diets have been proven effective for managing chronic GI signs in cats.¹⁶⁻¹⁸
 - Diets made with hydrolyzed or novel protein ingredients also may be recommended for cats with some types of chronic enteropathy because dietary antigens are suspected to play a role in GI inflammation.⁵
- Cobalamin (vitamin B12) deficiency has been well-documented in cats with chronic enteropathies, despite its abundance in feline diets.¹⁹⁻²¹ Vitamin B12 should be supplemented, either parenterally or enterally, if testing reveals a deficiency.³
- Probiotics, especially those shown to modulate the immune system or to have anti-inflammatory properties, may benefit some cats with chronic enteropathy as part of a multimodal therapeutic approach.⁷
 - Cats with chronic enteropathy experience patterns of dysbiosis similar to those found in people with IBD, although more research is needed.^{22,23}
 - Probiotics can confer a positive effect on GI function. Since different probiotic strains have varying effects on the host, specific probiotics should be chosen based on the desired goals.
- Initially, cats with chronic enteropathy may benefit from small, frequent meals (e.g., 3 to 6 meals per day). Frequent small meals can help improve nutrient absorption and minimize adverse GI responses.

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