

Feline Arterial Thrombo-embolism

What is it?

Arterial thrombo-embolism (ATE) is a severe complication of heart disease in cats. It occurs when there is significant enlargement of the left atrium (collecting chamber on the left side of the heart) which results in blood flow slowing and becoming static. Blood cells in cats are prone to sticking together under these conditions, causing a clump of cells, also known as a **thrombus** or **clot**.

The clot then passes through the heart and out into the circulation, where it can become lodged as the blood vessels branch and become narrower. Common locations include:

- at the top of the back legs - this is the most common and causes a sudden paralysis of the back legs, with cold hind feet.
- the kidneys - disrupting blood supply to the affected kidney resulting in organ failure
- the brain - causing "stroke" or seizure - type signs

In all cases this is an extremely painful condition, which usually causes affected cats to cry out and become breathless, as well as the above signs.

Treatment

The best approach to ATE is to try and prevent it. Medications which are commonly used for this purpose are:

- Aspirin - an anti-inflammatory drug which at low doses can reduce the chances of a clot forming.
- Clopidogrel (Plavix) - an anti-clotting treatment in tablet form
- Fragmin - a low molecular weight heparin which must be administered by injection.



If your cat is receiving any of these treatments, particularly in combination then you should monitor for any unexplained bleeding, and report this to your vet immediately if you are concerned.

Should a clot occur then treatment involves hospitalisation for pain relief and anti-clotting medication. If your cat suffers from this condition then unfortunately the prognosis is not good, as it is very likely to recur even if it is successfully treated the first time.

If you think your cat may have suffered an arterial clot please contact your vet **immediately**.

