

Statement on FIP therapy from the perspective of owners' interest groups

First of all, most companion animal owners entirely trust their vets, especially if they have been in contact for a long time and know each other. However, these owners are most unsettled when they realise that their vet is not familiar with the illness and/or the or the possibility of therapy, they do not receive any support or are even actively advised against therapy. Therefore, we are very pleased about the great interest in events like this.

Following this, the majority of accreted owners turn to us on the direct recommendation of their vets, followed by recommendations from friends with therapy experience, or finally as a result of the classic online enquiry.

Those who come on friends' recommendations, benefit from additional trust, which makes a lot of things easier. In other cases, there the fear of becoming a victim of a scam predominated, in addition to the extremely stressful situation about the condition of the beloved animal or in the worst case to harm their animal. Who can blame them for this? However, almost all contacts end up in the start of therapy. Those who do not start are often insecure or under pressure. This hurts, knowing about the success of the therapy.

We are all former "self-treaters", knowing the therapy from our own experience and wanting to provide other owners with the same opportunity.

- We show how and where to get the medicine quickly and reliably and point out dubious sources.
- We advise on the correct dosage and which checks are necessary during the therapy with the vet.
- We share experience and assessments on how to assess the success of the therapy since most vets have no information or experience.

Our role is certainly perceived warily by many vets, but we do not see ourselves as auxiliaries, we only fill a gap as a matter of necessity.

At the beginning we invest a lot of time in reassuring and explaining the course of therapy, risks and side effects we are aware of. After more than 4 years we can report no significant side effects of the treatment, except for abscesses caused by the injections, which confirms the current popularity of oral therapy. These initial consultations often last an hour or an hour and a half, and we also refer to the studies of the LMU Munich. However, many questions still arise in the first few days, often on behalf on their vets. Often, the veterinary information and clarification about the disease and its diagnostics seems insufficient. The most frequent questions of the owners are therefore usually

- Where did my animal get infected?
- What is the prevalence of the disease?
- What do I do with my other cats, is FIP transmissible?
- Is my cat in pain?

Our most frequent question on the other hand: Is that all the ran diagnostics, that have been done? Our queries are based on concerns over indiscriminately treatments or undiagnosed underlying conditions.

You wouldn't believe how often, even in age-critical animals with clear symptoms of ascites, ultrasounds, x-rays or punctate analysis are lacking, or even worse, diagnosis is based solely on a so-called "FIP rapid test". Full FIP screening and checking for neurological signs are often performed only on demand. Consequently, the number of unreported cases of FIP is likely to be much higher, especially when there is no ascites. Such cases often eventually turn to us, because everything else has already been tried in vain.

Though neglectable in numbers, cases of animals which were admitted for several days without success and without full screening diagnosis are particularly irritating. Impeded discharging due to emotional hostage is extremely frustrating. We plea all vets that an early onset will reduce the risk of the dreaded neurological symptoms, time is pressing when FIP is suspected!

On the other hand, we would like to emphasize the many trustworthy contacts with veterinarians who do great work. Veterinarians who have accompanied a treated case, are also convinced of the effect afterwards and often keep in contact for a long time.

Prof. Hartmann should certainly have enough to say about the therapy itself. We can use the results from thousands of cases since 2019: very good chance of cure of almost 95 %.

Even with worst clinical conditions, it is explicitly worthwhile to start therapy. FIV and FELV positive cases have also successfully completed the treatment. We saw many cases with severe anaemia, massive protein shifts, heavily increased bilirubin levels up to clear symptoms of jaundice. Even ocular symptoms or massive neurological symptoms have reasonable chances to get better (note: a sufficiently high dosage is then required).

Relapses after a completed therapy is low (single-digit percentage range) and is almost always due to previously undiagnosed neurological symptoms or insufficient dosage. Monthly veterinary monitoring by the veterinarians every 4 weeks and a final blood count and ultrasound have proven to be effective.

What is our aspiration? Of course, an approval of GS and an official therapy option. Until this happens,

- the support of vets in diagnosis and monitoring and rapid action for presumptive FIP cases.
- that both the concerns of the owners in this emotionally extremely stressful situation (am I doing something wrong, am I doing something forbidden, can I afford it) as well as the recommendations of the interest groups regarding diagnosis and treatment are genuinely considered.