

## **Feline Leukaemia Virus Support: An Offering in Memory of Steve**

### **Introduction – please read before referring to the supplements**

I have put this document together based on my own sudden education on [Feline Leukaemia Virus](#), sadly through first-hand experience and an upsetting outcome. I offer this information for anyone else trying to support their feline companion, to save them falling down the Google rabbit hole, and trawling through endless websites and information in the search for help. **Please note, I am not an expert on this virus, and this document does not replace veterinary advice.** I do recommend searching out both general practitioner vets and holistic vets, as I have come to realise that modern western medicine and traditional herbal/homeopathic remedies can really complement each other.

The information provided here is, for the most part, about supporting the immune system rather than treating the disease itself, as part of a holistic approach to feline health. I have learnt so much in the past week of researching non-stop morning, noon and night. Now armed with this information, if in the future another cat enters my life, I will be supporting their immune system health regardless of whether or not they are showing any signs of disease. It is heart-breaking for me knowing it was too little too late for Steve, and I share this information in the hope that my attempts were not in vain, and someone else's "Steve" will benefit.

In Steve's case, by the time he was diagnosed, he had progressed to non-regenerating anaemia. As well as supporting his immune system, I was trying to see if there was a way to support his ability to regenerate red-blood cells. I am aware this was a long shot, and against the odds, but I did come across a promising supplement called FeLife (mentioned in the information below). Unfortunately, it did not arrive in time for us to try it. Steve was definitely responding to the immune health side: the swollen lymph nodes around his face and neck were markedly reducing in size.

To note, Steve also had a heart condition (Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, a type of heart disease) and was on medication (clopidogrel, cardalis and furosemide) to delay heart failure. This affected what I could support him with, but also means I checked thoroughly that what I did offer him wouldn't affect his heart disease, and that everything complemented each other. There are so many products out there and I found it incredibly overwhelming, but persevered through desperation.

If your feline companion has any other health conditions or taking any medications, I would recommend checking suitability of use of NHV products (one of the supplement brands mentioned below) in particular with the product suppliers. The NHV products and Pet Wellbeing products are veterinary formulated and the support team are really knowledgeable to speak to. Both NHV and Pet Wellbeing have additional products available, not suitable for Steve due to his heart condition. If exploring use of them, make sure to check different brands against each other as they are concoctions of herbal supplements and you will want to select one or two products best suited to your feline friend, and that complement each other, rather than overdo it with multiple products, which can prove detrimental rather than supportive to the health of your companion.

**I will stress again that I am in no way anything close to a vet and this document does not replace veterinary advice.** This is purely a week's worth of intensive research, and an offering to support anyone trying to find information. This document is also not definitive; there are many more products out there. The ones summarised here I could get hold of within the quickest possible timeframe.

### *Additional information:*

In a few areas below, I reference a book called [A Veterinarians Guide to Natural Remedies for Cats](#) (abbreviated to VGNR where mentioned), which I highly recommend. It proved invaluable and is full of advice and experiences from an array of veterinarians.

Links to UK suppliers are included for each product. I utilised Amazon Prime to get next day delivery on many of them.

I sought additional support from [Herbal Vet Scotland](#) (a Holistic Vet based in Glasgow, who offer remote online/telephone consultations). I had to wait 5 days before I could get an appointment so persevered onwards with researching all the information below. When going through everything during the appointment, Jordan, the vet, confirmed that she would recommend almost everything I had done, and was glad Steve was already receiving these products. A slight concern she raised was the St John's Wort in the NHV Felimm product with Steve's heart condition, but it was likely in a small enough dose not to interfere. We were also about to start administering Steve with Doxycycline antibiotics on the off-chance he had blood borne bacteria hiding somewhere, and Jordan recommended coming off the Felimm for the duration of that, as the St John's Wort impacts how the liver metabolises medication.

**This demonstrates the importance of consulting a veterinary professional for advice.**

We had an extensive and really helpful discussion, and Jordan had some additional supplements to offer, tailored to Steve. I would highly recommend an appointment – it is definitely value for money, if it is a viable option.

### **The supplements**

[Liposomal Vitamin C](#) – Vitamin C was recommended in the book referenced above, and on various holistic websites. There are strong claims to its support of the immune system, including a vet who states he has reversed huge numbers of non-symptomatic FELV+ cats to negative by daily supplementing with Vitamin C (ref. page 193 of VGNR book). "Liposomal" is a superior form of vitamin C which is highly bioavailable, and reaches where it needs to go quickly. The body cannot store Vitamin C, so I was administering fairly regularly throughout the day.

Dosage: 5 drops (10 drops if using a 1000 mg product) mixed with a small amount of water, every couple of hours (can do more often if required – there is an amazing amount of info on administering vitamin C in emergency situations available [here](#) (refer to the PDF document on this webpage)). I administered directly with a [5 ml syringe](#).

[Ashwaghandha](#) – A vet in America swears by this herb (ref. page 189 of VGNR book). You can watch a video on him talking about it [here](#). This supplement supports blood health (including increasing red blood cells) in particular for this case, but has many other beneficial properties too.

Dosage: 10 drops x 3 times daily. I mixed in with food.

[NHV Felimm](#) – "Support for Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV), Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP), Canine Herpesvirus and other viral infections. NHV FELIMM contains a herbal formulation with a broad spectrum of action. This formula helps support a range of viral, fungal and bacterial related infections. It helps strengthen your pet's weakened immune system, helps with appetite and helps with energy levels." (copied from website)

Dosage: provided with product. Mixed twice daily in food. Give at a different time to any medications (with at least 30 minute gap).

Note: this is UK seller but it is available in other countries and is created in Canada. Here is [manufacturer's website](#), covering US/Canada, and I'm sure will be able to refer to distributors in other countries.

They may also recommend additional products specific to your feline companion. Steve's heart condition limited what was suitable for him.

**NHV Natures Immuno** – “Immune booster, support for cancer, cardiovascular and general health. NHV NATURES IMMUNO is a blend of mushrooms known for their extensive health benefits, including use as an adjunct with chemotherapy. It helps to boost the immune system and helps protect against viral infections and helps supports pets suffering from cancer. It is also useful for cardiovascular, liver, kidney, diabetic and endocrine health. Helps increase energy and promotes general well-being.” (copied from website)

Dosage: Provided with product. Mixed twice daily in food. Give at a different time to any medications (with at least 30 minute gap).

See note on NHV Felimm product above.

**Milk Thistle** – So many places I searched (including VGNR book, pg 202-204 & 225) spoke highly of using milk thistle to support liver function; really important when supporting an unwell cat.

Dosage: provided with the product. I gave Steve 10 drops 1 x daily, in food

**Omegease** – a ready supply of Omega 3, 6 & 9, to support immune health specifically in this case, but has many other benefits too.

Dosage: provided with the product. 1 x daily in food.

**FeLife** – This is one of the most hopeful things I happened across. Sadly, I did not get the chance to try it (see Steve’s story below), but I conversed with USA-based vet, Paul Clemens, who is involved in producing this FDA approved homeopathic product, and he has had 100% success rate of using the product so far (albeit on a very small number of patients), and is currently awaiting on further test results of the product. His experience includes a FeLV+ cat on his last legs, who he had recommended euthanasia for. After the carer of this cat wanted to take him home to be with family to say goodbye, Paul offered the supplement as a supportive supplement, to keep him as comfortable as possible. On a follow up call to check in, fully expecting the cat to have died in the interim, he was surprised to discover he was back to his normal perky self.

At the time of writing this, Paul is currently looking for FeLV+ cats to try the supplement out on, in return for records of the cat’s initial diagnosis information, and how the cat is responding. He is available through [Facebook](#), and has requested you send him a private message if you are interested in obtaining FeLife.

Dosage: provided with product

### **Digestive Support**

Steve had been given an antibiotic injection to try see if it could help him. Antibiotics take out all bacteria, including the beneficial, so it is really important to support digestive tract health with probiotic supplements.

**Spark Daily Nutritional Supplement** – “SPARK is a comprehensive supplement designed to supply more nutrition. Nutrition that canines and felines can't get from their diet. A leading naturopathic veterinarian developed SPARK to be a complete, all-in-one delivery system of 43 natural ingredients, all researched and synergistically combined for their ability to maintain excellent health.

Many of the ingredients are termed "superfoods" because they are rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. These ingredients are easy to absorb and assimilate, and they maintain good health right down to the cellular level” (copied from listing)

This product contains many probiotics, it also has additional nutrients to support immune health and general health and wellbeing, so is a brilliant all-rounder. This is a beneficial product for any stage of a companion animal's life.

**[Fortiflora Feline Probiotic](#)** – As well as containing an array of beneficial bacteria, Foriflora also seems to be incredibly palatable, and mixed and sprinkled onto food, encourages eating.

## **Diet**

Cats who are unwell start to go off their food. This is what I did to support Steve and ensure his digestive tract kept going.

**[Natures Menu: Country Hunter](#)** – I was trying to find a good quality food for Steve to support his health. I am personally concerned about mainstream supermarket brands, both from a cat health perspective, and also the animal welfare side. I loved Steve to pieces, but know I was keeping him alive and kicking at the expense of the lives of others. I had tried Steve on organic brand, [Yarrah](#), which he was quite fussy about and then found the above, which isn't organic, but is free range. Steve was happy to eat this brand, and it is almost exclusively meat. I understand that food can be a tricky topic when it comes to cats, not only in finding the best quality on a budget, but also trying to find something that is desirable to the individual too.

*When a cat is going off food...*

**[Cat Sprinkles](#)** – Steve loved this, and it encouraged him more often than not, although it got to the point he would mainly lick the top of his food and hardly take the meal itself.

**[Thrive Chicken Topper](#)** – Another topper that got Steve purring.

**[Nutritional yeast flakes](#)** – Steve has always loved these! So it figures they were helpful to encourage him to eat.

Fortiflora – see digestive support above.

**[Dreamies](#)** – Literally crack cocaine for cats! Even at Steve's low points, the majority of the time these would get purrs and he would take them. Not the healthiest thing, but in a critical state of health, they offered joy and comfort.

**[Catit creamy treats](#)** – I discovered these very late in the day (they arrived the day before Steve's death), but they were an absolute winner and he lapped them out of the tube as I slowly pushed the contents out. Again, I'm sure they aren't the healthiest, but scored big on the comfort factor.

## **Other**

**[Feliway Optimum Diffuser](#)** – Not sure if it helped or not, but bought one of these in an attempt to support Steve's comfort.

**[Easypill cat putty](#)** – If your cat is on pills, this is an absolute Godsend. Sprinkled with the "Cat sprinkles" (linked in diet section) doubles the appeal factor and gets pills taken with minimal stress.

**[20ml Syringes](#)** – Increasingly, Steve was eating less and it got to the point we had to support him to eat. I mashed up his natures menu food with some warm water, using a fork and back of spoon – needs a bit of work to make as smooth as possible. I had also ordered some [recovery food](#), which is supposed to be easier to administer via syringe, but it arrived two days after Steve's death.

There is a fantastic document to support Syringe feeding [available here](#).

My technique for successful feeding was kneeling on the floor with Steve supported between my legs. Leaning over him, to stop him raising his head too high and it also allowed me to see into his mouth. Placing the syringe in at one side of his mouth, and making sure when I gave him a little bit of food, it landed on top of his tongue, then pulling out the syringe to allow him to swallow comfortably, before repeating. Some inevitably ended up dribbling out, so I wrapped a tea towel as a bib around Steve and had some wet and dry paper towel on hand to clean him and the floor up after. Most importantly, speak kindly, and give lots of fuss and love, especially after.

### **An example of Steve's supplement feeding regime**

I was worried about giving all the supplements at once, although it did seem safe to do so in most cases (making sure to keep the administration of heart pills at a separate time). Because I was home almost all of the time, I chose to space out everything. This is an example of Steve's daily feeding regime (with the aim of getting 2 x 85 g sachets of food into him), noting that it was only a couple of days of the full repertoire of products, between me finally getting hold of everything and Steve's death. By this point, he was primarily being syringe fed. If he wasn't, I would have chosen to offer smaller, more frequent meals in a bowl.

Note: because of Covid lockdown, I've been at home so could keep this up. I appreciate this is a full-on schedule, it can be condensed to fit different time constraints and commitments.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Food quantity</b>	<b>Added supplements</b>
7:00	30 ml	¼ sachet fortiflora (+ Heart Meds)
8:00		Liposomal Vitamin C syringe
9:00	15 ml	Ashwaghandha Nature's Immuno ¼ sachet fortiflora
10:00		Liposomal Vitamin C syringe
11:00	30 ml	Felimm
12:00		Liposomal Vitamin C syringe
13:00	30 ml	Milk Thistle Spark Ashwaghandha
14:00		Liposomal Vitamin C syringe
15:00	30 ml	Omegease 1/4 sachet fortiflora
16:00		Liposomal Vitamin C syringe
17:00	15 ml	Nature's Immuno Ashwaghandha ¼ sachet fortiflora
18:00		Liposomal Vitamin C Syringe
19:00	30 ml	(Heart Med)
20:00		Liposomal Vitamin C Syringe
21:00	15 ml	Felimm

## **Steve's Story (26<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021)**

*A video offering tribute to Steve's life can be viewed [here](#).*

Steve came into our lives in 2016, just after I had moved in with my Partner, Chris (relocating from Edinburgh to a cabin on a croft in the North-West Scottish Highlands). Steve appeared very shyly one day not long after, and quickly disappeared again. Over the coming weeks he became increasingly bold about introducing himself, and making himself at home. We knew which croft house he was visiting from, but we didn't know his name, so jokingly called him Steve. It turned out he had not long moved up from Edinburgh either!

It got to the stage that he refused to go back to his original home, to the point he was starving himself. We had no intention on cat-napping, but it was also difficult seeing him starting to lose weight, and we didn't have the heart to leave him sitting outside on the doorstep in all weathers. So, we started feeding him. At some point in all this, we had found out that his name was actually Bartok, but by then he was responding to Steve... oops!

Thankfully his original carers understood that Steve had chosen where he wanted to spend the majority of his time, and appreciated a big part of that was because he was scared of the resident dog (unlike his sister, Bella, he hadn't been bold enough to swipe her around the face and put her in her place!)

In the years that followed, we became firm friends and had many adventures together. He came on walks down to the beach, up to the view point; he joined me at the veg patch, sunbathing and frolicking around while I tended the plants, he even came camping with us (within his home range), and got up to hilarious antics in the night, leaping onto the tent and sticking his paws through the gap in the outer lining, swiping at the inner. The resultant claw holes on our tent, along with scratch marks on door frames will forever be a reminder of these wonderful (and annoying but now cherished, in the case of door frames) times spent together.

One year ago (the weekend of the first Covid-19 lockdown) we moved from the rented cabin into our very own house, about a mile up the road. Of course, we really wanted Steve to come with us. In talking to our neighbours, it became official that we were Steve's humans. And the memories kept on building as our life unfolded together in our new home. Last October it was discovered that he had Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, which was devastating at the time, knowing it would be life shortening for him. We began giving him meds to delay the onset of heart failure, hoping we had started in good time and with the plan for a follow-up appointment in May 2021 to find out how quickly (or – more hopefully – slowly) the heart disease was progressing.

I've lost track of time of recent events, but just over a month ago, I noticed Steve was licking and eating gravel, which seemed peculiar. Not long after, I noticed a huge lump at his throat. We rushed him to the vets where they confirmed a few of his lymph nodes were swollen and took tests. Over the coming weeks we were relieved to find out he didn't have cancer. The relief was short-lived when it was discovered he was very anaemic, with follow up tests revealing he had Feline Leukaemia Virus. It was a complete kick in the gut. Additional tests sadly showed that despite being given an antibiotic injection, his anaemia was getting worse and it no longer looked like he was regenerating red blood cells. We were told there was nothing more to be done. This was on 17<sup>th</sup> March.

I couldn't accept that prognosis, and have since been doing everything I can to find a way out of this unbearable situation. This document is a result of that.

The following and final part of Steve's story unfolded in the space of week (although it has felt like months), between 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March. Having researched, ordered and begun administering various supplements to support Steve's immune health, our final hope for Steve to get help with his increasingly



severe anaemia came in a message from an absolute angel of a vet, based in America. Paul Clemens had experienced his own loss of his feline friend, Wizard, to FeLV back in the 70s, and has relatively recently discovered a supplement, called FeLife, that seems to be promising for FeLV+ cats. He reached out to help, kindly arranging to get a couple of bottles sent priority post from America to us.

In the meantime, Steve was really responding to the supplements he was already being given. A lot of them had only just been started and yet within days he went from mostly sleeping on the bed, to coming downstairs and sitting on the doorstep, or just outside in the garden. And we noticed his swollen lymph nodes decreasing in size. He was so weak though, and I was tracking the progress of the parcel with baited breath.

Then Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> happened. If I could go back and change anything it would be how I approached this day. It had taken 48 hours for the FeLife to get all the way from America to Inverness, and according to the tracking information, it was going to take another 48 hours to get two hours between Inverness and our house. I rang up to see if there was anywhere I could go and pick it up from. It turned out that the parcel would have actually been arriving that day... if it had been put on the correct van. But there had been a mistake, and it had travelled to the east coast instead of west. At that moment it was currently winging its way back to Inverness. I decided to go pick it up, and left my precious Steve for the four hours it would take. Within 10 minutes of driving, I had passed the delivery van the package should have been on.

While I was returning with the FeLife, Steve tried to get up the stairs. He didn't have the strength or enough oxygen available to support himself in doing so. It was too much for his body. He had totally perked up in himself, but was still far too weak. 1.5 hours from being home, Steve sadly died.

There have been so many "what ifs" and "if onlys" arising as part of processing the grief and losing a best friend, while trying to come to terms that it has happened the way it did. All I know is that I tried my best, and Steve was loved so much. We are crushed and broken, but that is a testament to how much of an honour it was to be chosen by him and experience his infectious joy and zest for life. I wouldn't have that part any other way. I do wish we could have had enough time to try the FeLife.

It is in honour of Steve and his memory, that I have written this document. I hope that it buys enough time for someone else to try and perhaps overcome the odds of FeLV.

Steve is still laying on the spare room bed as I type this. My caring woodworking partner has just carved a headstone into some pine wood, and we are off to find him a final resting place in the garden.



## **A note of thanks**

All the info above happened because of people from various walks of life, and none of this would have been possible otherwise.

I woke up this morning after my first decent night's sleep in weeks, and decided I needed to write something to help others facing a similar situation. I have been writing non-stop since 5am and didn't expect it to be such a hefty document.

Firstly, thank you to dear friend Cristie Moore of Intuitive Sound and Energy, who offered me a distance reiki session last night, which allowed for the aforementioned deep and restorative sleep. I was inconsolable yesterday and if it wasn't for the support, I would have probably spent last night awake and distracting myself by binge-watching Netflix, and I wouldn't be writing this document right now.

Thanks to Steve's vets, particularly Esti and Neil, who have been wonderful from the outset, always shown Steve kindness, and have been extremely supportive of my need to explore alternative options (plus putting up with the numerous phone calls, questions and tears). I don't know how anyone can be a vet, I would find it emotionally exhausting, and am so grateful for the support. The vet thanks extend to Jordan from Herbal Vet Scotland, who was a fantastic source of knowledge in exploring holistic approaches to Steve's health, and offered supportive options and advice around caring for him.

A big thank you to the members in "Owners of FeLV+ and FIV+ Cats" Facebook Group, who I happened across on my initial search for help. So much of the information above has come through various messages of support and guidance, and it was invaluable on this huge learning curve. One of the biggest positives that has come from this experience is seeing so much kindness, caring and sharing. You are all beautiful people and I couldn't have supported Steve without you. Some of you have messaged me privately to offer even further support and I thank those of you who have done so. In particular I want to thank Paul Clemens, who went above and beyond to get FeLife to me as urgently as possible. I am still overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity.

Thanks to all the organisations and companies I wrote to for advice on their products – so many of you went above and beyond to move mountains and get urgent information/products to me in a quick turn-around time.

Thanks to FedEx and Menzies teams. I wish it had been a less important delivery that went wrong, but despite everything you were kind, understanding and did all you could. A particular thanks to Amima for checking we had managed to get the delivery, and for your empathy after hearing the sad news.

Thanks to my family and friends for the emotional support, kind words, love, and for holding space for me to be broken. I look forward to actual hugs when we are allowed.

Thanks to my partner Chris, part of the original trio. Now it is just the two of us supporting each other through this unbearable time.

And finally, thank you to Steve. It's been a privilege knowing you and learning from you, more than words will ever be able to express.