

# Vet's cat-leukemia treatment

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## stirs debate

by Ranny Green  
Times pet editor

**D**isdained by his peers and dismissed by researchers, Dr. Alfred Plechner is nevertheless becoming a celebrity in Southern California.

Since 1986, when his book, "Pet Allergies: Remedies for an Epidemic," was published, Plechner has been a favorite target and the laughingstock of many veterinarians. But he's gaining widespread media attention.

The thesis of his controversial book is that grocery-store pet foods are among the triggers for numerous pet ailments.

"I'm beginning to get some converts and hopefully the last laugh," said the West Los Angeles veterinarian.

For instance, he claims feline-leukemia victims usually suffer from a hormone imbalance. In treating more than 2,000 cases,



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Plechner has discovered that with an individualized hormone-replacement plan, dietary changes and regulation, the virus can be controlled, if detected early enough. There are cases in which leukemia-positive cats have become negative after several weeks of treatment, although veterinary

textbooks say this is impossible.

Both genetics and an improper diet, Plechner believes, contribute to the imbalance. His unscientific studies of several breeds have shown a high rate of feline leukemia in certain lines.

The dietary association stems from a "chemical feast" of additives and high concentrations of beef. Plechner says slaughterhouse wastes, disguised as byproducts on labels, plus red dyes and sodium nitrate inserted for cosmetic purposes in some grocery-store pet foods, contribute to the animal's physical breakdown. Lamb, poultry and rice tend to be the least offensive foods, says Plechner, one of the founders of Natures Recipe, a 5-year-old line of pet health

foods marketed nationally.

His testing has indicated that cats which develop signs of the disease are not producing enough

of the hormone cortisol. Subsequently, their immune (defense) systems go out of control, Plechner said. They overproduce antibodies, which in turn go on a rampage, attacking both the virus and the cat's tissue, he said. Plechner characterized this double dose of disaster, involving both the virus and immune system, as an internal destruction derby. If untreated, the cats will die from overprocessing of the virus.

"The leukemia virus can strike at almost any tissue or organ and open the door for a variety of associated diseases."

Each case is different, he said. "You can't use a generalized approach. You must conduct a battery of tests on each animal, study the results and initiate a replacement program using prednisone and/or synthroid for immune deficiency."

Four to six weeks later, Plechner administers a follow-up

test to determine the antibody level. He adjusts the hormone levels accordingly. The cat usually remains on the medication for the remainder of its life.

Signs of feline leukemia include respiratory infection, abscesses, dermatitis, gingivitis, anemia and abdominal pain.

Because he is a clinician, Plechner's work is not conducted under a controlled environment like a researcher's. Hence, scientific acceptance of his successes on feline-leukemia treatment has not been overwhelming. "When you come out from beneath a rock with research like this, you're considered a freak. I have accepted the fact some of my peers view me as a freak.

"The treatment works, however. I have more than 2,000 cases to substantiate it."

Said Dr. Grady Shelton, a veterinarian with the FeLV Referral Clinic in Seattle, who has re-

searched the disease for five years: "I'm open to anything that will help study disease. But to be creditable, it must be done with scientific controls.

"I wouldn't get too excited about his successes until this is done. Even if he didn't want to become involved firsthand, he could present the data of his treatment procedure and ask an independent scientific evaluator to proceed.

"If it's successful, most veterinarians would accept it."

Shelton was not familiar with Plechner's work but cautioned that an assortment of purported feline-leukemia cure-alls previously haven't produced suitable results.

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■ Ranny Green's Pets column appears on Sundays.

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■ The Landas' Dog News column is on H 5.

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