

Understanding your Pet's Blood Work :

As a veterinary practice, we sometimes ask you, the pet owner, to run certain diagnostic tests on your pet's blood. You may already be familiar with some of these tests from listening to your own personal doctor or from watching shows such as Animal Planet's Emergency Vets. Blood tests help us to determine causes of illness, diagnose underlying conditions, and monitor response to medications and progression of certain diseases. Blood tests, in addition to the complete physical exam, help us to assess fully your pet's health prior to anesthesia and also give us a baseline from which to interpret future changes. This brief pamphlet should help you understand each of the tests we might ask to run. We have placed check marks in the boxes next to blood work that we recommend for your pet. Please feel free to discuss any of these tests with the doctor during the visit.

Complete Blood Count (CBC)

This is one of the most common tests along with a serum chemistry panel that is performed. A CBC gives information on hydration status, anemia, infection, the blood's clotting ability and the ability of the immune system to respond to infection. This test is essential for pets with fevers, weakness, pale gums, or loss of appetite. If your pet needs surgery, a CBC can detect bleeding disorders or other unseen abnormalities.

Serum Chemistries

This common panel of serum tests evaluates organ function, electrolyte status, hormone levels, and more. It provides important information for older pets, pets that are vomiting or having diarrhea or toxin exposure, and pets receiving long term medications. It also helps us select appropriate anesthetic agents for your pet when undergoing surgery.

Urinalysis

Although urinalysis is not a blood test, it aids in evaluating overall kidney function when done in conjunction with serum chemistries. Urinalysis is also a key test for determining bladder health, diabetes, and the presence of a urinary tract infection or inflammation. For this test, the urine needs to be fresh. We can get the sample in the hospital during your pet's visit or if necessary, you can collect urine at home. Urine collected at home must be no older than 12 hours and must be kept refrigerated.

Urine Culture and Sensitivity

Urine cultures determine whether or not there is a bacterial infection of the bladder. Sensitivity testing will aid in selecting the most appropriate antibiotic to treat the infection quickly and completely. Urine for this test must be collected by the doctor during the hospital visit. It helps greatly if your pet is not permitted to urinate for several hours prior to the visit.

Thyroid Testing

Thyroid tests can detect abnormal levels of thyroid hormone in your pet as well as monitor response to therapy. In our feline friends, thyroid disease typically means that they have too much circulating thyroid hormone, known as hyperthyroidism. Our canine companions become hypothyroid, meaning they have abnormal low levels of thyroid hormone and excessively levels thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH). Both conditions can be treated and the doctor can discuss treatment options with you. For animals that are on thyroid medication, we recommend frequent thyroid tests to determine response to therapy. Once we know that the dose is appropriate, the testing is less frequent. Ideally, we should draw blood 4-6 hours after your pet receives the pill. Please let us know what time you gave the last dose of thyroid medication so we can time the test appropriately.

Fecal Testing

Fecal tests are done to check for intestinal worms (roundworms, hookworms, whipworms), intestinal protozoa (coccidian, Giardia), or an overabundance of bacteria. Tapeworms, however, rarely show on this test, so if you see worms on your pet's stool let us know. It is important to test your pet at least annually for intestinal parasites. We recommend more frequent checks if there is a history of exposure to intestinal parasites. Even stool that is normal in appearance can harbor evidence of an intestinal parasite problem. These parasites can cause significant intestinal problems in your pet and health problems in humans

Heartworm Testing

Annual heartworm testing is recommended for all dogs. Please discuss heartworm testing for your cat with the doctor as it is not done routinely, but can provide valuable information about your feline friend. Heartworm infection is an easily preventable disease for both cats and dogs that causes serious health problems and eventually death.



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☐ Feline Leukemia Virus/Feline Immunodeficiency Virus Testing

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) are two common viruses that infect cats and cause serious disease by suppressing the immune system. Neither disease is treatable. Both of the diseases are contagious to other cats and ultimately fatal. A simple, rapid blood test can provide valuable information about the health status of your cat or kitten and help us to provide appropriate treatment to your cat. It is also important to be aware of the FeLV and FIV status of your cat when introducing your cat to others.