

**E**ven pets that seem frisky, wide-eyed, and in the best of health can have hidden medical problems. Left undetected, these problems could grow into serious, even life-threatening conditions.

Blood tests are essential tools for identifying diseases at the earliest stage possible, when they are the most treatable.



### Your veterinarian may recommend blood tests to:

- Screen your pet for potential developing problems so they can be treated, hopefully before they become serious.
- Make sure your pet is healthy enough to take certain medications, particularly if there's an underlying problem, such as kidney or liver disease.
- Establish a baseline picture of what represents good health for your individual pet.

## Q & A

### Why does my young dog need annual blood tests?

When basic laboratory testing is done as part of your pet's annual examination, those values are recorded. Your veterinarian can then review your pet's health record at each subsequent exam, and spot any abnormalities or trends sooner, often before serious diseases can develop.

### My 8-year-old cat is perfectly healthy, but her doctor suggested a group of blood tests as part of her annual examination. Why?

Older animals are more at risk for chronic conditions, such as kidney or liver disease and endocrine problems. By testing your cat more frequently, they are hoping to catch any potential health problem before it can become life threatening.

### What's involved in a VCA Wellness Profile?

The Wellness Profile includes a complete blood count, biochemical profile, and heartworm test. For senior age pets (age 7 years and up), an expanded group of tests is run.

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VCA 1540C



## Blood Analysis

Detecting and treating hidden health problems



# Blood Analysis



## A vital tool for screening out disease

When pets are ill, they can't tell us what's wrong. That is where laboratory tests such as blood analyses come into play.

### The importance of blood tests

Blood tests can be used to detect, treat and prevent potentially dangerous illnesses.

Sick or elderly animals often have more than one disease process affecting them at the same time, complicating diagnosis and treatment. Blood tests can help pinpoint specific problems.

In addition, some medications can be harmful if your pet has certain underlying problems, such as kidney or liver disease. In such cases, your veterinarian may order blood tests to make sure your pet is healthy enough to take the medication.

Finally, even in young and healthy pets, laboratory testing helps your veterinarian establish a baseline picture of what represents good health for your individual pet.

Blood tests are recommended as part of your pet's annual physical examination. That way, your

veterinarian can spot health trends sooner, before they become more serious.

### What does a blood test look for?

Standard blood test panels for dogs and cats routinely check for many types of problems.

Some common blood tests include:

- **A Complete Blood Cell Count (CBC)** — provides important information about the types and numbers of blood cells in your pet's blood. A low number of red blood cells, for example, indicates anemia, while a high number of white blood cells can indicate an infection, chronic inflammation, or other disease process.
- **A Blood Chemistry Profile** — particularly important for evaluating organ function (e.g., liver, kidneys), electrolytes, blood sugar, screening for clues that an endocrine disorder may be present, etc. Any abnormalities will help direct your pet's veterinarian on any further diagnostic tests that may be necessary.
- **A Heartworm Test** — which can detect evidence of heartworm disease.

To provide a complete picture, your veterinarian will often combine a blood panel with other types of laboratory tests, such as a urinalysis and/or fecal examination.



### Your veterinarian may recommend a blood test:

- **Before anesthesia** is administered, as an essential part of patient evaluation in preparation for a medical procedure or surgery. Your veterinarian will decide which tests are most important to run.
- **As part of your pet's annual physical examination**, both to spot problems as early as possible and to develop a baseline picture of your pet's health.
- **If your veterinarian suspects a health problem** and needs additional information to make an accurate or complete diagnosis.
- **Whenever your veterinarian recommends medications** for your pet that might be contraindicated if he or she has certain underlying diseases.

### How blood samples are collected

Your veterinarian can usually collect any needed blood samples during an office visit.

In some cases, however, blood samples need to be drawn at specific times over an extended period. Your pet may then need to be kept at the hospital for a few hours or, in certain circumstances, overnight.

### VCA Pet Tips:

- 1 Blood testing should be performed every year as part of your pet's annual exam.
- 2 Older pets and/or those with chronic medical conditions may need certain laboratory tests conducted more frequently than once a year.