

WELLNESS TESTING FOR DOGS



Laboratory screening is like a window into your pet's body, allowing us to see things we can't find on a physical exam. Even pets who appear healthy and normal can have abnormalities on the inside. This is why we do blood testing prior to anesthesia. We don't want to miss kidney or liver disease that would impact our choice of anesthetic drugs.

Testing when your pet is young and healthy also gives us baseline numbers that we can track over time. If your pet is ill, we don't just look at that day's test results. We can get a lot more information by comparing those results with previous ones.

For example, "normal" blood counts vary substantially from one dog to the next. A white blood cell count of 14,000 may mean an infection for a dog whose usual count is 7,000. For another dog, 14,000 may be perfectly OK.

5% of young dogs who appear healthy actually have something abnormal on blood testing. This may not sound like a lot, but it means that one of every twenty dogs walking through our doors can be helped if testing is done.

Doing a complete blood count, or CBC, when your dog is healthy gives us a baseline to compare with for the rest of your dog's life. If your pet becomes ill, it will be much easier to interpret the blood test results and make an accurate diagnosis. This test is a priority for dogs between the ages of one and five.

The same is true for certain blood chemistry tests. Tracking trends over time helps us to anticipate problems and detect them sooner. The earlier we can diagnose a problem, the more likely we will be able to treat it and the longer a pet's life expectancy is likely to be.

Many disease problems are genetic or inherited, and certain breeds are at risk for certain diseases. Some of these can be tested for, enabling earlier diagnosis and intervention. Some simply require awareness on the part of the owner as to what to watch for and when to call the veterinarian. We try to make sure that every owner of an at-risk breed knows about the diseases and problems that could affect their dog.

For example, wheaten terriers are prone to a specific form of kidney disease that is diagnosed using a very specific urine test. If you own a wheaten, we will recommend doing this test every year. Scottish terriers, on the other hand, are prone to bladder cancer. For these dogs, a different urine test is recommended.

Some genetic diseases can be screened for using DNA tests. Over 170 different genetic diseases can be found this way. We can also test your mixed breed dog to see what breeds he or she is made of.

Each time your dog comes in for a wellness visit, we will review with you the lab tests that are most appropriate for your dog's age, breed and health status. Together, we can decide on a package of tests, or prioritize the most important one or two. The more we know, the better we can help your dog lead a long, healthy life.

Stool testing for intestinal parasites Regular Panel **All dogs should be tested annually**

Heartworm and tick-borne disease blood test **All dogs should be tested annually**

Baseline CBC Test at least once by age five

Chemistry panel with electrolytes Annually is best

CBC & chemistry panel with electrolytes (pre-anesthetic testing) Required prior to anesthesia; standard annual screening for all ages

Thyroid level Older pets, breed risk or those with symptoms

Bile acids level (liver function test) Breed risk, history of liver disease/inflammation

ProBNP cardiac enzyme test (heart muscle damage indicator) Breed risk, cardiac symptoms

Urinalysis Older pets, breed risk or those with symptoms

Urine Protein:Creatinine Ratio Older pets, breed risk or those with symptoms

DNA testing Breeds Genetic screening panel Specific DNA test

ECG screen Anesthesia, older pets, breed risk or those with symptoms

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