

Diagnostically Speaking...

Pets, tests and all the rest!

As a pet owner, it's important to ensure that your furry family members receive the medical attention necessary to stay healthy. While an annual exam is an excellent way to accomplish this, it is also vital to run diagnostic tests similar to those run on humans, to "see on the inside" what the outward exam cannot. This is especially important because your pet can't tell you when he doesn't feel well or if something just doesn't feel right.

Diagnostic testing of the blood, when combined with urinalysis, a physical exam and your pet's health history, can paint an accurate portrait of your pet's health.

Which diagnostic tests are of greatest value for your pet and why? Here are the top diagnostics pets should have annually or bi-annually depending on their age and medical condition.



Core Annual Diagnostic Tests

Complete Blood Count (CBC) – Just like your doctor runs a complete blood count to determine the number and types of blood cells in your body, your pet needs this test to screen for underlying infection, anemia and illness.

Chemistry – This test gives us insight into your pet's physical and chemical status and may focus on one or more organs. It also measures the quantity of electrolytes, enzymes and chemical compounds in your pet's body to see how the internal organs are functioning.

Fecal – Worms are one of the most common health problems in dogs. A fecal test looks for parasites in the stool that have infected your pet's digestive tract, such as hookworms, whipworms, tapeworms, giardia and liver flukes. These parasites are often picked up by eating contaminated soil or stools, and by licking paws that have picked up worm eggs during a walk.

Urinalysis – This test looks for several things. It can indicate metabolic disease such as diabetes, assess the physical and chemical composition of your pet's urine, and detect problems with the kidneys or urinary system.

Thyroid (T4) – Many dogs and cats suffer from underactive or overactive thyroids that can affect metabolism and weight. A thyroid test or T4 identifies endocrine disorders, such as an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) in dogs, and overactive (hyperthyroidism) in cats.

Heartworm/Tick Disease Tests

Heartworm Disease – Heartworm is a deadly disease found in all 50 states and across Canada. Heartworm disease is caused by heartworms that enter your pet's bloodstream via a mosquito bite. It only takes one infected mosquito bite to infect your pet. Heartworm disease affects dogs and cats, and literally clogs the heart, lungs, liver and blood vessels with these "heartworms." Annual testing confirms that your pet is free of heartworms; preventative medication ensures they remain free of these devastating parasites.

Tick Disease – When this parasite latches onto your pet and dines on their blood, it can transfer serious illnesses like Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, or ehrlichiosis to you or your family. Testing for tick-borne disease and treating or vaccinating against it, is important to your pet's health as well as your own. Humans can become seriously ill and experience long-lasting effects like weakness, exhaustion and dehydration.

Age-Related Testing

Young Adult – Just like humans, no two pets are exactly alike. It's important to have a baseline for what's "normal" for each pet. Pets ages 1-6 should have an annual "young adult" diagnostic panel run to help us determine the baseline and monitor that they remain in their "normal" range. An annual young adult diagnostic panel normally includes many of the tests mentioned here such as CBC, chemistry, urinalysis and fecal testing, as well as thyroid function and heartworm disease.

Senior Wellness – You may notice your beloved pet starting to slow down a bit. Our pets age much quicker than humans and generally, pets over age 6 should begin twice-yearly diagnostic testing, which includes CBC, chemistry, urinalysis, and thyroid function. Fecal and heartworm disease testing may also be recommended.