Health & Wellness

The Importance of Point-of-Care Testing for Your Pet’s Health

When you take your pet to the veterinarian, whether it’s for a wellness check-up, or to diagnose or treat an issue, your veterinarian may suggest certain tests or procedures to ensure your pet is in optimal health. This type of testing is called preventive testing.

Preventive testing helps to establish a baseline for your pet, which can be compared to future tests for changes. It also helps you catch issues earlier, before they become full-blown problems or even emergencies, helping your pet live a longer, healthier, more trouble-free life. When these tests are done at the point of care you’re able to get those results quickly, often before you even leave your veterinarian’s office!

What is point-of-care testing?

Point-of-care testing is preventative or diagnostic testing that is run and analyzed where your pet receives care, like at your pet’s veterinary clinic. This type of testing typically provides results more quickly than typical lab results, so you can get an answer or diagnosis and decide next steps (like additional testing, admission to the hospital, or a referral for additional care or treatment) in the same visit to your veterinarian.

Research shows that diseases and underlying issues can be detected earlier by monitoring your pet’s trends through regular preventative testing. In an analysis of 1,197 cat preventive visits, a quarter of the cats had abnormalities in their results that could be consistent with a range of serious conditions, and many of those cats had results with abnormalities that warranted further evaluation. Preventive lab testing is sometimes the only way to identify health issues before they become something serious.
Common point-of-care tests for pets

What types of tests your veterinarian may recommend for your pet depends on their breed, age, and lifestyle. Some of the most common preventive, diagnostic, or monitoring tests that can be run and analyzed in-clinic through point-of-care testing include:

Chemistry blood tests
These tests can provide indicators of the health and function of your pet’s pancreas, liver, kidney, intestine, thyroid, and many of their other organs and body systems.

A common test is a biochemistry profile, which will check many different factors including blood glucose (checking for evidence of diabetes, Addison’s disease, or liver dysfunction), blood urea nitrogen (BUN) and creatinine (both indicators primarily of kidney/renal health), blood protein levels (where abnormalities could indicate inflammation, liver dysfunction, or even certain cancers), and specific liver enzymes (which, when abnormal, could indicate a range of different problems with the liver).

There are also specific blood tests to measure the thyroid hormone (looking for either too much or too little), to check for viral infections (like FeLV and FIV, two debilitating feline viral infections), to check for the presence of heartworm infection, or to screen for tick-borne diseases.

Hematology tests
The most common hematology test is the Complete Blood Cell Count (CBC), which looks at red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. It can help the veterinary team detect conditions like anemia and leukemia, and can detect inflammation, blood clotting concerns, and possible infections.

Urine tests
Urine tests, which may be performed alongside chemistry blood testing, look for the presence of blood, protein, glucose, or other abnormalities in the urine. This tells the vet team not just how well your pet’s kidneys are working, but also provides insight into other areas such as bacteria in the urine (which could mean a urinary tract infection).
Benefits of point-of-care testing

- Your pet’s test results are available to you the same day\(^2\).
- You get peace of mind that any unseen disease will be caught earlier.
- Detecting disease early often means it can get under control faster and lessen the discomfort for your pet.
- When disease is detected early, it often improves the cost you’ll have to spend to get the condition under control and maintain it over time.
- It’s easier for your veterinary team to recognize possible diseases and other impending problems in the future, should something come up.
- When a problem arises, proactive testing can be used to monitor the condition and your pet’s wellbeing.

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