

## **Cat Focus Month Two - Bloodwork**

Last month, we outlined the importance of once-per-year cat exams as well as twice-per-year exams for senior cats over 7 years old. These exams are vital to maintaining cat health year round. This month we will discuss the importance of yearly bloodwork for all cats.

### **Why Bloodwork?**

Cats are unbelievable good at masking signs of sickness. Bloodwork gives us a look at the internal health of a cat. This is especially important to complete yearly because it gives your veterinarian something to compare each year and accurately monitor the unique blood test results of your cat. Because cats cannot talk, deadly diseases are identified earlier and can be more manageable or treatable when bloodwork is completed yearly. Identifying diseases earlier is not only better for the pet, but it can also mean that disease management is less costly because it is treated early. Having yearly bloodwork on file also helps you and your veterinarian manage your pet's health risk before scheduling any surgical procedures or anesthesia. Yearly wellness bloodwork will help your pet lead a longer, healthier life.

### **How is Bloodwork Done?**

Bloodwork only requires a very small blood sample be drawn from your cat. This procedure is completed by using a very small needle, and is drawn from the inside of the cat's hind leg. Most cats tolerate this very well, and only need to sit still for a couple seconds. Your cat's blood is then processed using specialized laboratory equipment to analyze the unique profile of your cat's blood. If your cat is nervous of long rides or strange places, like a veterinary clinic, talk with us at The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic, and we will recommend a few options to avoid unnecessary stress, including an oral sedation option.

### **Diseases**

**Diabetes** - Overweight cats are prone to diabetes. Diabetes occurs when the pancreas is no longer secreting insulin naturally, and the body cannot use glucose (sugar) for energy. Signs of diabetes include increased drinking and urination as well as weight loss. A warning sign on bloodwork is high Glucose (blood sugar). If caught early, some cats can go into remission, if treated with diet changes and weight loss, and they may not require medication.

**Hyperthyroidism** - This disease occurs frequently in senior cats. Cat's with hyperthyroidism have a thyroid gland that is overproducing hormone. This causes the cat to act hungry, lose weight and affects blood pressure and other organs. This condition is diagnosed by high thyroid levels on bloodwork. Once diagnosed, cats are managed on daily medication.

**Chronic Kidney Disease** – This is a common condition seen in senior cats. Signs of chronic kidney disease are usually not noticed until this condition is progressed, but can include increased drinking, weight loss, vomiting and inappetance. Bloodwork can show elevated Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN) and Creatinine levels, and may include electrolyte changes and anemia.

**Feline Leukemia** -This is a disease similar to aids in people, as it causes immune suppression. Cats that are outdoors should be screened yearly. Feline leukemia is spread by grooming, cat bites or fights. Once infected, a cat can then spread the disease to other cats. This disease would be diagnosed by a positive Feline Leukemia Test as part of a blood panel screening.