

Pancreatitis in Cats

Cats with pancreatitis play their cards close to their chests. Non specific clinical signs of lethargy, dehydration and anorexia are present, whereas vomiting and cranial abdominal pain seen in dogs are not typically noted. Both acute and chronic forms occur in cats, and although the chronic form is somewhat milder, clinical signs may be very similar. That said, some cats with chronic pancreatitis may remain subclinical until pancreatic fibrosis results in diabetes mellitus and/or exocrine pancreatic insufficiency.

Routine biochemistry often reveals hyponatraemia, hypochloraemia and hyperglycaemia, and may show elevations in hepatocellular enzymes, bilirubin and a decrease in bicarbonate. Lymphopenia, and neutrophilic left shift and toxic change may be seen in the CBC.

Historically, total lipase test reagents were not useful for diagnosing pancreatitis in cats. However, the newer reagent DGGR, which is metabolised primarily by pancreatic lipase, has a very similar sensitivity and specificity to feline pancreatic specific lipase (fPL) and has the advantage of lower cost and rapid turn-around time.

Specificity and sensitivities for the total lipase test (DGGR-based) and pancreatic specific lipase tests are not perfect with sensitivities of 60-65% and specificities of 35-45%. As such, results need to be interpreted in conjunction with history, clinical findings and other blood work.

