



Blood Sampling Protocols

Blood samples are performed as a means of diagnosing or monitoring certain conditions. For some conditions, the timing of the blood sample is important. We may also need to perform a period of fasting prior to the blood sample.

Haematology

This blood test provides information on the blood cells.

Protocol:

A blood test can be obtained at any time.

Biochemistry

This blood test provides information on how certain organ systems and metabolic systems are working.

Protocol:

Ideally a 12 hour starve is performed before this blood sample is taken but this is not essential.

Malabsorptive profile

This blood test is used to assess folate and cobalamin levels, which may be low if the intestine is not functioning properly. We may also include markers for pancreatic inflammation and function.

Protocol:

A 12 hour starve should be performed before this blood sample is taken.

Triglyceride monitoring

This blood test is used to assess lipid levels.

Protocol:

A 12 hour starve must be performed before this blood sample is taken.

Bile acid stimulation test

This blood test is performed in pets that we suspect may be suffering from a liver disease. It is used to assess if the liver is functioning normally and requires 2 blood samples to be taken.

Protocol:

A 12 hour starve must be performed before this blood sample is taken. We obtain a blood sample and then feed the patient a meal. A second blood sample is taken 2 hours later.

ACTH stimulation test

This test is carried out for the diagnosis and monitoring of treatment for Cushing's disease. This is a condition where the body produces too much steroid hormone (cortisol). The test is also used for the diagnosis of Addison's disease. This is essentially the opposite of Cushing's disease and is a condition where the body does not produce enough steroid hormone (cortisol).

Protocol:

This test requires 2 blood samples to be taken. A blood sample is obtained and then the patient is injected with a drug. A second blood test is obtained 1 hour later and the response to the drug is assessed. When used for diagnosis, this test can be performed at any time. When used for monitoring the treatment of Cushing's disease this test should be performed 4-6 hours after the medication is given. A fasting period is not required unless this test is combined with a biochemistry test.

Pre-pill cortisol

This test is an alternative method for monitoring the treatment of Cushing's disease.

Protocol:

A blood sample is obtained just before the medication is given. A fasting period is not required for pre-pill cortisol measurement; however this test is often combined with a biochemistry test, which ideally should be performed after a 12 hour starve.

Thyroid monitoring

Dogs

This test is used to monitor patients that are hypothyroid. These patients have an underactive thyroid gland that does not produce enough thyroid hormone. These dogs are on medication to supplement the thyroid hormone.

Protocol:

A blood sample is obtained to measure the thyroid hormone levels in the body. To adequately monitor therapy, we need to obtain a blood sample to measure the maximum (peak) levels of thyroid hormone, and this is performed on 3 hours post-pill. We may also need to measure the minimum (trough) levels of thyroid hormone, and this is performed on a blood sample taken just prior to treatment. No fasting is required for this blood test.

Cats

This test is used to monitor patients who are hyperthyroid. These patients have an overactive thyroid gland that produces increased amounts of thyroid hormone. These cats are on once or twice daily medication to block thyroid hormone production.

Protocol:

A single blood sample is taken to measure the thyroid hormone levels in the body. This sample can be taken at any time of day regardless of when the medication was given. No fasting is required for this blood test.

Phenobarbital monitoring

This test is used to monitor patients on phenobarbital (brand name Epiphen, Soliphen, Phenoleptil) which is used to control seizures. Patients are given the medication twice daily (12 hours apart).

Protocol:

A blood sample is obtained to monitor the phenobarbital levels in the body. If your pet has been on phenobarbital for more than 3 weeks, there is no specific time that we need to obtain the blood sample, but the blood sample should be performed at the same time on each occasion. Most owners elect to perform a blood sample around 4-6 hours after the morning dose. On some occasions, the timing of the blood sample is important if we wish to check the maximum (peak) and minimum (trough) levels in the body. A blood sample to measure peak levels is taken 4-6 hours after the morning dose and a blood sample to measure trough levels is taken just before the morning or evening dose. We will advise you if this is required. Ideally, you should fast your pet for 12 hours before this blood sample to reduce the fat levels in the blood (which may affect the results).

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