

Renal (Kidney) Disease

What is renal disease?

Renal disease is the irreversible damage of the kidneys and is a progressive disease which will advance with time. The length of time over which an animal will deteriorate depends on the individual. The disease can present acutely but more commonly as a chronic disease.

There are many possible underlying causes and sometimes these may not be possible to identify.

The kidneys' important roles in filtering toxic substances and maintaining electrolyte balances means that the progressive loss of kidney function begins to affect these functions.

What are the Clinical Signs?

- Increased thirst and increased urination
- Poor appetite/ weight loss
- Lethargy/ depression
- Vomiting, poor coat quality and bad smelling breath

What do we do?

Diagnosis

- Blood: To measure urea and creatinine, these will be elevated in kidney disease due to lack of filtration from the body
- Urine samples: To look at the concentration (this will be reduced in renal disease) and assess protein loss
- Further tests: These may be necessary to identify underlying causes and may include ultrasound and x-rays

Therapy

- Intravenous fluid therapy: this may be given initially to correct dehydration
- Further therapy depends on whether an underlying cause has been identified and is aimed at supporting kidney function and reducing complications

What can you do to help?

Kidney disease is unfortunately an irreversible condition but there are a number of things that we can do to slow down the progression and improve quality of life. Please see the following page for details.

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What you can do to help

Increase water intake

- Increase the number of water bowls. Cats prefer large shallow bowls
- Place the water bowl in a different room to the food bowl
- Add flavours to the water e.g. stock cubes (low salt), tuna juice
- Consider using a water fountain
- Consider changing from dry to wet food or adding water to the dry food

Change to a renal diet

These are prescription diets which are specifically designed to meet the requirements of an animal with renal disease. They are lower in protein and phosphates but higher in omega 3 and B vitamins. If a cat will not eat a renal diet then it is better that they eat something rather than nothing at all

Add a phosphate binder to the food

These are designed to reduce the blood phosphate levels, which is important in minimising complications associated with renal disease. They are especially useful where a dog/ cat will not eat a renal diet.

ACE inhibitors (benazepril)

This drug dilates blood vessels and appears to decrease protein loss through the kidneys.

For more information see <http://icatcare.org/advice/cat-health/chronic-kidney-disease-cats>