



## CHRONIC RENAL INSUFFICIENCY (CRI)

Chronic renal insufficiency (CRI or '**kidney failure**') is a common complaint in cats; in fact it is estimated that more than **half of all cats over 10 years** of age have some degree of CRI. Many cats can live long, happy years after being diagnosed with CRI

The kidneys are made up of hundreds of little pumps ('nephrons'), whose role is to filter the blood, maintain water balance, and remove waste products. Cats have many less nephrons than most other animals, and perhaps this is one of the reasons they get kidney problems more often. In CRI, the kidneys aren't doing their job as effectively as they should be. This means there is a build up of waste products in the blood and that the urine is more dilute. CRI is **diagnosed by blood and urine tests** together- testing for high levels of some of the waste products in the blood, mainly urea and creatinine, along with urine that is inappropriately dilute.

Another common feature of CRI is the presence of **high blood pressure** (hypertension). Hypertension can in turn lead to more damage to the kidneys, as well as other organs like the brain and eyes. It is recommended to test blood pressure once CRI has been diagnosed, and regularly thereafter. High blood pressure can usually be treated very successfully with once daily medication.

The underlying cause of CRI is commonly unidentified, and the condition is often slowly progressive. Sometimes, the veterinarian may recommend looking further into the cause of the kidney disease by performing further tests such as taking an X-ray or ultrasound of the kidneys.

Once diagnosed, a number of things can be done to help make your cat's life as comfortable and healthy as possible. The provision of fresh and **plentiful water**, a change to a **diet specially formulated** for CRI (see 'Dietary Management of Renal Disease' notes) and regular checks with the vet will all help in this aim.

The **regular checks** (where blood and urine samples are taken and the blood pressure is tested), test for levels of urea and creatinine, phosphate (which increases as there is less than 10% of the kidney working), electrolytes (Potassium, Sodium, Chloride), and the haematocrit as a general measure of anaemia. If any of these levels change, we can take positive action (for example it is not uncommon for potassium levels to decrease, and we can then give supplements, which will give your cat more energy and make them feel better).

Ultimately, the aim of diagnosing and monitoring CRI is to help keep your cat happier and healthier for longer; to not only **increase the quantity** but the **quality of their life**.