

Loose Bowels Battle

Sample testing is needed for definitive diagnosis of weight loss and soft stool problem.

J. Veronika Kiklevich, DVM

Posted: Tue Dec 7 00:00:00 PST 2004

Q. I adopted my 2- to 3-year-old cat from a reputable shelter almost five months ago. My little girl lives strictly indoors, has had regular vet checks and has received all her vaccinations except for FIV.

Since I brought her home, she has had a problem with soft stools. It was recommended that we try a high-quality preventive formula cat food, which my cat did not care for at all. After trying a couple other recommended diets, we still did not see any improvement. Recently she began having loose stools with small amounts of blood. She's also had a couple accidents on the carpet. She never was a big eater, but she appears to be eating less as time goes by.

I recently took her to the vet, and apparently she lost another pound in the past month. Now she weighs only 8 pounds and is dehydrated. Our vet suspects the problem is more likely to be gastritis, pancreatitis or hepatitis. If the blood work comes back normal he then will test for FIV.

I have so many questions: Were all the tests appropriate? Should my cat have had a stool sample sent to the lab? Should my cat be on a prescription diet? Also, if you know anything about the prognosis of hepatitis or pancreatitis, I would appreciate your advice.

A. First, I want to commend you for adopting your friend from the shelter. The number of potential companions needing homes is overwhelming, and your little girl is certainly fortunate to be in such a loving home.

Your cat's loss of a pound in the past month is cause for considerable concern, so it is good that you are committed to getting to the root of the problem. Certainly doing blood work (with a urinalysis) is important, but I think you are also right on the mark with requesting a stool sample examination. I doubt that the routine parasitic offenders (roundworms) are suspect here, but a plethora of less frequently encountered parasites can cause these symptoms, including coccidia (unusual in this age cat, but possible), hookworms, whipworms, giardia, tritrichomonas (I think this one is particularly worth searching for), and various fungal organisms.