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"Galore" - Cat with Kidney Failure



Galore

Kidney failure is one of the commonest illnesses we see in older cats. In fact it is estimated that approximately 16% of cats over the age of 15 have significant kidney dysfunction.

The kidneys perform numerous tasks, the main ones being to excrete waste products, regulate water balance and electrolytes, and produce certain hormones to stimulate red blood cell production.

There is a large amount of "reserve" kidney function, so much so that no outward signs of kidney failure will become apparent till about 75% of the kidneys have stopped working. Once this figure is reached, waste products start to build up, levels of certain essential electrolytes change and anaemia starts to develop. Other serious complications such as urinary tract infections and high blood pressure can occur, and these will hasten the kidneys' deterioration if left untreated.

The first signs that a cat has kidney disease are usually an increased thirst, weight loss and lethargy, though sometimes it can first show with a problem such as sudden-onset blindness due to haemorrhage into the eyes from high blood pressure.

Unfortunately, the damage to the kidneys is permanent at this stage. Usually we do not even know what originally caused the damage in the first place – we are just left with the end stage of a disease which caused permanent scarring to the kidneys.

Whilst kidney disease of this nature cannot be cured, much can be done to slow down it's progression. Special diets can help to reduce the build up of wastes and unwanted electrolytes, fluids can be given to help restore water balance, urinary infections can be treated with antibiotics and high blood pressure can be easily controlled with modern drugs.

Many cats can live with kidney disease for a long time with a little help from us. It does not have to be the instant death sentence that many people assume it will be. Early diagnosis is crucial, so regular health and weight checks, and careful monitoring of water intake are all essential in older animals.

My own family cat "Galore" has recently been diagnosed with kidney disease. Despite her results indicating she was in the advanced stages of the disease, she has responded superbly to treatment, and is currently living a good quality of life, which we hope will continue for some time to come!

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

You won't care how much we know - until you know how much we care