

TABLE 1

Diagnostic Tests and Recommended Frequencies for Senior Dogs and Cats

Diagnostic Test	Recommended Frequency	
	Canine	Feline
Fecal testing for parasites	1–4 times/yr, depending on use of preventive products and lifestyle.	1–2 times/yr, depending on health and lifestyle factors.
Tick-borne disease	Annually	N/A
Heartworm	Annually	Detailed information on heartworm testing is available in the American Heartworm Society guidelines. ¹
Comprehensive CBC (including cell morphology, differentials and pathologist review if necessary)	Every 6–12 mo.	
Chemistry (TP, albumin, ALT, glucose, BUN, creatinine, sodium, potassium, calcium, SDMA if available)	Every 6–12 mo.	
Urinalysis (USG, sediment, glucose, ketones, bilirubin, protein, occult blood)	Every 6–12 mo.	
Imaging	Imaging of a region of interest should be performed if clinically indicated. Breed-specific screening may be appropriate.	Imaging of a region of interest should be performed if clinically indicated.
Electrocardiogram	Perform an electrocardiogram annually in breeds with high risk of cardiac disease (e.g., boxers, Dobermans), or in other patients when clinically indicated or if an arrhythmic condition is suspected.	
Urine protein:creatinine ratio	If proteinuria is identified or persistent microalbuminuria is present.	
Thyroxine (T4)	Recommended annually.	Strongly recommended annually.
Blood pressure	Recommended annually.	Strongly recommended annually. Recommended every 6–12 mo in healthy geriatric cats.
Retroviral testing	N/A	Consider based on individual patient's risk.
NT-proBNP	Annually and to be strongly considered before an anesthetic event.	

¹ American Heartworm Society. Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*) Infection in Cats. American Heartworm Society, 2020. Available at https://d3ft8sckhnm2.cloudfront.net/images/pdf/2020_AHS_Feline_Guidelines_Summary_11_12.pdf?1605556516

ALT: alanine aminotransferase
 BUN: blood urea nitrogen
 CBC: complete blood count
 N/A: not applicable
 NT-proBNP: N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide
 SDMA: symmetric dimethylarginine assay
 TP: total protein
 USG: urine specific gravity

The 2023 AAHA Senior Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats are available at aaha.org/senior-care.

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2023 AAHA.

