

# “Kidney Cats & Dogs”

A cat or dog in “kidney danger” is a wide-open diagnosis. Lots of stuff you need to know. Kidney conditions can be discussed in terms of **declining function, impairment, or failure**. And the *causes* of kidney “disease” number in the dozens. From cancer, to infection, to virus, to just plain “old”. **BUT**. Age is the biggest and most common factor. Old cats and dogs naturally experience kidney impairment, as the tissues that make up a “kidney” begin to age out. It’s normal.

## What do the numbers mean?

- **BUN** is the short term number that says how the kidney is doing Right Now.
- **Creatinine** is a number that better PREDICTS how a case is doing, and WILL DO.

How does that look?

Dogs and cats with kidney impairment start drinking a lot of water, usually more than a year before the kidney actually crashes. Drinking a lot is Mother Nature’s way of diluting the kidney-poisoning. Eventually, drinking a lot is not enough to maintain dilution and hydration plus sufficient kidney function, and the kidney “fails”. The pet becomes “sick” lethargic, won’t eat, and may even develop gastrointestinal signs like vomiting and diarrhea. Kidney impairment is the first thing I think of when I see a 13+ year old dog or cat that’s not eating, and dehydrated. We take a blood sample to assess the condition. Severity can be derived from the Creatinine. Use this chart in consideration **ONLY** of “old” pet kidney impairment\*.

Lab Value For Creatinine	Prognosis	Symptoms
Normal	Great	None
2.0 to 3.0	“Odds are pretty decent.” It’s 90:10 in favor of the pet.	Not acting right. Appetite is just so-so. Drinks a lot.
3.0 to 4.0	“Iffy” to “Not really sure” but “It could work out, let’s see what Fluids do this week.” It’s 60:40 in favor of the pet.	Appetite trailing off, feels sick. Dehydrated. Diarrhea and vomiting.
4.0 to 5.0	A creatinine over 4.0 has a poor prognosis but good things have happened in the past. It’s 60:40 <b>against</b> the pet.	Appetite gone, feels about dead. Dehydrated. Not even strong enough to vomit.
5.0 and higher	A creatinine higher than 5.0 carries a poor prognosis. Only a few cases have rallied. It’s 80:20 <b>against</b> the pet.	Appetite gone, feels about dead. Dehydrated. Not even strong enough to vomit.

**Management:** Any (or all) of the following: Fluids under the skin daily, or by other route and schedule for a trial period, (1-2 weeks?) and retesting the kidney values for improvement. If found – continue fluids. Special diets like Hill’s K/d are vastly helpful. Supplemental bicarbonates, water soluble vitamins, Azodyl, Epogen, appetite stimulants, diuretics and even steroids have been helpful. No pet gets “all of the above” and a rare pet even needs to. There is no “cure” for “old dog” or “old cat” kidneys.

**GOAL of Management:** Extension of high-quality lifespan. *Kidney disease is eventually terminal*. But how soon? Success can be measured in months, but often: In years. The chart shown above is HIGHLY indicative.

\*All bets and generalizations are off with “Leptospirosis” infections because, once correctly diagnosed, it’s treatable. Kidney cancers and other ‘infections’ also have a different outcome. This document refers principally to kidneys that are in the process of “aging out”.