

What is serum amyloid A (SAA)?

SAA is the primary acute phase protein in cats and increases with acute systemic inflammation, most frequently caused by infection. In normal animals SAA is almost zero, but it starts increasing within 6-12 hours following an inflammatory insult and closely mirrors clinical condition. As inflammation resolves, it drops rapidly.



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How can SAA help my patients?

Cats are naturally stoic making them difficult to assess and monitor. SAA is a rapid, objective, and sensitive method to help detect underlying infection that your feline patients may be hiding, before it becomes a critical issue. Since it doesn't increase significantly with chronic or localized conditions, it can help differentiate clinical conditions that often have a similar presentation, including the feline favorites of "ADR" or vomiting.



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I thought SAA was an equine thing. How does this apply to cats?

SAA has been successfully used for years by equine vets to help diagnose infection and monitor patients. Common applications include differentiating respiratory infections from asthma, identifying subclinical infections, and monitoring efficacy of antimicrobial therapy to name a few. SAA can help for many of the same issues in cats, as the biology of SAA is very similar in both species.



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Can't I just run CBC to tell me the same information?

WBC count provides a lot of useful information, however it is influenced by many different factors that may have conflicting effects on different cell types (such as neutropenia seen with viral infections). It also changes less quickly than SAA, both when infection is developing and when it begins to resolve. In horses, SAA has also been shown to be more sensitive than fever to identify subclinical infections.



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