

Welcome back to another episode of the Vital Animal Podcast. This is Dr. Will Falconer.

We're going to talk today about blood tests. Do blood tests tell you everything you need to know? Or are there simpler, surer ways to know when your animal is unwell and needs attention?

Some of my readers and listeners have told me over the years that they happily trot their dog into the vet annually for blood work.

Now, you've likely learned by now that you don't need to do that for titer testing, right? If that's news to you, be sure to listen to earlier episodes with Dr. John Robb and Julie Anne Lee on titers.

But what about annual chem screens and blood count tests?

Is that a wise practice? Should everyone be doing this? Are you starting to get FOMO by merely hearing about this phenom?

Let me explain why I don't think this is necessarily a wise investment. And, I'll do you one better by telling you something much more useful that doesn't cost you a penny. Listen UP!

I. Any harm in it?

Other than the toll it takes on your wallet, I don't think annual blood work is a dangerous thing.

Unless it's packaged with pressure to revacc your already vac'd pet.

Or it's packaged with flea, tick, and HW pesticides.

Or a bag of 'prescription' food for Sadie.

All of those things would be detrimental to the health of your pet, no question, and I listed them in order of harm potential, with vaccines always residing at the #1 spot.

But, if it's just a blood sample, sent off to a lab to assess a bunch of chemistries and counts of various types of blood cells, there should be no particular harm to your animal by doing this.

Are you curious about Leroy's liver function?

Sadie's cell counts, like wbc, rbc, platelets, and the like?

Bobo's blood sugar levels?

Kitty's kidney values?

Thorsen's thyroid numbers?

Okay, go ahead, but just know there are limits to this information as well as the expense of running annual tests.

II. What are the limits of this info gleaned?

Well, the most obvious one to me, speaking as a trained homeopathic vet, is that you're testing something that's pretty far downstream from a problem occurring.

In other words, by the time the liver or kidney or blood sugar is out of whack enough to show up on a blood test, your animal has been ill for quite a spell.

These values are rarely acute, sudden changes, unless Rover just romped through an oat field that was recently sprayed with glyphosate to desiccate the crop for the convenience of the combine's scheduled appearance.

Those numbers typically turn South with chronic disease processes that have been smoldering for quite some months. Thorsen's thyroid was sliding, and Kitty's kidneys were challenged long before you decided to get the blood test drawn...

I think you'll agree that it's in your best interest to catch disease sooner than later, correct? The chances of recovery and cure are greatly enhanced when treatment starts earlier than later.

[A caveat here that I want you to know: the commonest diseases of our day, whether in pets or their people, are chronic in nature. Remember that word? It simply means slow, smoldering disease that lasts and lasts, often for life if you haven't sought truly curative treatment.

Most importantly, I want you to remember that, while modern med is great at treating aCUTE disease, it's always failed to cure anything chronic. And likely always will fail.

So, let's put that in simpler terms, to make sure it's crystal clear.

Acute disease could be a car accident, with horrible trauma, a condition known as shock, broken bones, maybe a concussion even.

Emergency medicine in the developed countries is quite good at fixing these sorts of things.

Chronic disease, again the commonest stuff we see in the trenches of vet practice or human medicine, for that matter, is much more insidious.

Food sensitivities or flea allergies causing your dog or cat to scratch out her hair, make bloody sores, or inflamed stinky painful ears — these are things you're much more likely to confront in your life with pets.

Hypo- or hyperthyroidism; arthritis, HR disease, KI disease, autoimmune disease of various kinds, inflamed organs like eyes, ears or bones, all the way to cancer: these are the chronic diseases, the ones that make your animal miserable long term and slowly drain your savings account.

Being the norm now, it's the prevention of these diseases that I focus on, as conventional medicine has zero cures up their sleeves for these nasties.

Oh, they'll throw a lot of drugs at them, or cut out parts or reshape knee joints in vain attempts at cure, but these man-made diseases (wolves and bobcats don't get them by the way) — they just slowly get worse the longer the drugs are used to try to cover up symptoms.

And back to blood tests: the odds of you finding anything chronic smoldering in your animal with a blood test, at least early enough to do them the best you can, those odds are slim at best.

So, let's talk about those free things you can focus on to get a head start, and how you can use these freebies to get some serious curative treatment working for your animal.

What are these freebies that are available to you?

III. In a Word: Symptoms

These have been guiding healers and animal caregivers for centuries. Symptoms what kept our mothers over millennia apprized of when the youngsters needed to be attended to, whether with herbs or fasting or homeopathy or acupuncture or dietary changes.

Symptoms are known and highly valued to all homeopaths, who use them as a window into HOW your animal is out of sorts, thereby guiding appropriate remedy choices.

In our rush into modern times, we've often lost sight of these valuable clues, but they are usually quite easy to appreciate with a bit of attention turned towards them.

I have more examples of symptoms and how you can track them in #24 Symptoms: Wildly misunderstood by your vet. You can get there easily by visiting that episode at VitalAnimal.com/24.

The thing I want to convey in today's episode however is this: Symptoms show up well before blood values change!

Just like you may know when you're about to get sick. Have you ever felt that back of the neck feeling, like maybe a slight chill or a sensation that something is there, almost like trying to get in?

I think I'd been vaguely aware of that earlier in my life, but it really made more sense when I studied acupuncture and TCM, and heard that the Chinese called this "invasion of the Wei Chi", if I recall correctly.

That symptom is something only you know, internally. It can't yet be measured on a thermometer even, though a fever is likely on its way.

Similarly, if your cat Kiki starts drinking copious amounts of water compared to her normal, and the litter box is wetter and needing changing more often, you've got a solid symptom,

and one worthy of your concern. It could be diabetes. It could be early kidney failure. It's possible it's even something else, but catching this symptom early can help you gain direction and decide on treatment.

Or, if a month after a round of shots, Sadie seems to be spending a lot of time licking her paws. Way more than she ever used to. (This is very common, by the way, as vaccination often has a lag period of close to one month before The Itch shows up).

And, while Kiki's thirst may in fact already show up in her blood work, I can guarantee you Sadie's itchy feet will NOT.

You can use these symptoms, especially when they are a CHANGE over what you are used to seeing in your animal, to get busy and work on her health.

Maybe that's a diet change, from kibble to balanced raw food.

Maybe that's ditching the flea, tick, or HW poisons in favor of a more natural approach.

And maybe, best yet, you've been keeping track of your animal's symptoms for a while now and these recent changes now have you searching out a homeopathic vet to do the deeply curative work of constitutional prescribing.

I submit that symptoms, regularly recorded, will help you far better than blood work done annually ever could.

Symptoms are what's kept us well for millennia and what's tipped moms off that help is needed, for as long as we and the animals have been on the planet.

Thanks for listening, keep an eye out for symptoms, and to learn more about how you can track them, be sure to listen to episode #24.

The show notes for this episode, like all episodes, will have more helpful info and links for you and is easily found: Just open your browser and type in VitalAnimal.com/36. That's VitalAnimal.com/36

This is Dr. Will Falconer, and until next time, keep on with your careful work of tending to all those in your care, those innocents who depend on you to make wise decisions on their behalf.