**IDEXX SNAP® fPL™ Test—Reference Laboratory Accuracy Pet-side**

Pancreatitis, an inflammatory condition of the exocrine pancreas, is a multifactorial disease in cats, with a variable clinical course and outcome. Feline pancreatitis is more common than many practitioners realize.

Diagnosis of this elusive disease can be challenging. The presenting signs are most commonly nonspecific and may include anorexia, lethargy and dehydration. Mild cases of pancreatitis can remain undetected because of the lack of clinical signs. A fast, accurate pet-side test for pancreatitis is needed to help veterinarians quickly rule in or rule out pancreatitis in patients presenting with nonspecific signs of gastrointestinal (GI) illness.

**Background**

Dr. Jörg Steiner and Dr. David Williams developed and validated the feline pancreatic lipase immunoreactivity (fPLI) assay at the Gastrointestinal Laboratory at Texas A&M University for the diagnosis of pancreatitis. The fPLI assay demonstrates both sensitivity, for detecting significant pancreatitis, and specificity, for helping to rule out pancreatitis. 

IDEXX collaborated with Dr. Steiner and Dr. Williams to develop a feline pancreas-specific lipase (fPL) assay, the IDEXX Spec fPL® Test, available through IDEXX Reference Laboratories. The Spec fPL Test uses monoclonal antibody technology.

The reference interval and sensitivity and specificity for the Spec fPL Test (see figure 1) were determined in a study for which results were presented at the ACVIM Forum/Canadian VMA Convention in Montreal, Canada, in June 2009. The Spec fPL reference interval for healthy cats was determined to be 0.7–3.5 μg/L. Elevated fPL concentration was defined as >3.5 μg/L. Results consistent with pancreatitis were defined as ≥5.4 μg/L.

**Requirements for Development of the SNAP® fPL™ Test**

As the Spec fPL Test became the standard of care in testing for feline pancreas-specific lipase, the benefit of a pet-side test using the same methodology became obvious.

An effective pet-side test would have high agreement with results from the Spec fPL reference laboratory test. It would be a sensitive screening tool for pancreatitis by providing an abnormal result for any sample with an fPL concentration greater than the Spec fPL cutoff of 3.5 μg/L.

IDEXX developed the SNAP fPL Test to meet these requirements and to provide fast, accurate and easily-interpreted pet-side results.

**The SNAP fPL Test, the Pet-side Version of the Spec fPL Test**

The SNAP fPL Test uses the same biological reagents as the Spec fPL Test but provides results in 10 minutes. The result is displayed as a colored sample spot that is compared to a reference spot. If the color intensity of the sample spot is lighter than the color intensity of the reference spot, then the fPL concentration is normal. If the color intensity of the sample spot is equal to or darker than the reference spot, then the fPL concentration is abnormal.

**Validation of the SNAP fPL Test**

Two studies were performed that compared results of the SNAP fPL Test with Spec fPL results.

**Study 1: In-clinic Performance of the SNAP fPL Test**

Trained technicians from four veterinary practices visually interpreted the results of the SNAP fPL Test using serum samples collected from their feline patients.

**Study Design:**

Unique feline serum samples from 80 cats (20 at each location) were assayed on the SNAP fPL Test. Each sample was tested once on three independent lots of the SNAP® fPL™ Test, for a total of 240 tests. Samples were then submitted for Spec fPL® testing.
Results:
Of the 80 feline samples, 61 had normal fPL concentrations, as defined by the Spec fPL Test results (≤3.5 μg/L). The percent agreement between the SNAP fPL results and the Spec fPL results for the normal population ranged from 89% to 93% across the three lots of the SNAP fPL Test.

There were 7 samples with elevated fPL concentrations, as defined by the Spec fPL Test results (see figure 1). The SNAP fPL Test correctly identified these samples across all three lots of the SNAP fPL Test. The percent agreement between the SNAP fPL results and the Spec fPL results was 100%.

There were 12 samples with fPL concentrations consistent with pancreatitis, as defined by the Spec fPL Test results (≥5.4 μg/L). The SNAP fPL Test correctly identified these samples in 35 of 36 testing events. The percent agreement between the SNAP fPL results and the Spec fPL results ranged from 92% to 100%.

Table 1: Agreement between Spec fPL and SNAP fPL Test results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spec fPL concentration</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage agreement SNAP fPL/Spec fPL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal (≤3.5 μg/L)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>89%–93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevated (&gt;3.5 μg/L to &lt;5.4 μg/L)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent with pancreatitis (≥5.4 μg/L)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92%–100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Agreement between clinical assessment and SNAP fPL Test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical assessment</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Abnormal</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely pancreatitis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably pancreatitis</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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Summary and Conclusions
Diagnosing feline pancreatitis can be difficult, especially because most cats present with nonspecific GI signs.

The SNAP fPL Test has a high percentage of agreement with the reference laboratory Spec fPL Test, the most accurate test available for feline pancreatitis. The SNAP fPL Test provides an accurate, reliable, pet-side tool to help veterinarians quickly rule in or rule out pancreatitis. Included as part of the initial workup, the SNAP fPL Test provides valuable diagnostic information sooner to help the veterinarian determine whether pancreatic inflammation is likely and, if so, to speed time to treatment.

In those cats with abnormal SNAP fPL results, consider follow-up testing with the Spec fPL Test to determine fPL concentration and to assess disease severity. Periodic monitoring with the Spec fPL Test can help to assess response to therapy.

References
5. Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Westbrook, Maine USA.