The importance of negative/normal results

All tests provide important information about your pet. Many of our wellness plans include diagnostic tests as part of your pet’s comprehensive exams. This allows your Banfield doctor to have a baseline for what values are “normal” in your pet so that changes in your pet’s health are caught early. When your pet is ill several tests may need to be run to rule out certain diseases. A negative test provides your Banfield doctor with an updated “map” of your pet’s body systems and is a very useful tool for determining what disease your pet may have.

Thyroid and cortisol levels

The thyroid is a gland located in the neck that produces thyroid hormone (thyroxine or T4). This hormone is responsible for a myriad of different functions within the body including metabolic rate, temperature regulation, and blood pressure and to influence other hormone function and production. Due to the number of body systems that are impacted by this hormone, it is obvious that if this hormone isn’t present at the appropriate level in the body, multiple different problems can arise. In fact, thyroid disorders are the most common hormone imbalances recognized in dogs and cats. In dogs, low thyroid levels (hypothyroidism) are most common and are related to weight gain, skin infections, thinning hair coat, lethargy, and sometimes neurologic disorders. In cats, an increased thyroid hormone level (hyperthyroidism) is the most common form of the disease. This serious disease can cause increased blood pressure, heart disease, weight loss, behavior changes and sometimes contribute to kidney failure.

The adrenal gland produces a hormone called “cortisol” which is usually released in response to physical or environmental stresses such as sickness, pain or even anxiety. Excessive amounts of this hormone are related to a disease in people called “Cushing’s disease” or hyperadrenocorticism. This disease can cause a constellation of different symptoms and contribute to multiple different disorders (such as diabetes, dermatitis, urinary tract infections, obesity, and increased chance of infection). A severe decrease in this hormone (hypoadrenocortism), similar to “Addison’s disease” in humans can also occur. This form of adrenal disease can be life threatening. This disease is usually associated with extreme lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, and electrolyte abnormalities in dogs. Both of these adrenal diseases are less common in cats.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.