



Liver Red Flags: When to Ring the Vet

The handful of signs that mean pick up the phone, and how urgently

PETSLIKEMINE
LIVER & GALLBLADDER

PET NAME

SPECIES / BREED

MY PRACTICE / OUT-OF-HOURS

Most liver trouble is slow and grumbling, watched over weeks with repeat bloods. But a short list of signs means the liver is struggling now, and a couple of them are true emergencies where hours count. This sheet sorts the "ring today" from the "go now" so you are not left guessing at 11pm. When in doubt, phone: a good practice would always rather hear from you.

GO NOW: SAME-DAY OR OUT-OF-HOURS EMERGENCY

A cat who has stopped eating for more than about two to three days, even a cat slimming for other reasons, can trigger a dangerous fatty liver (hepatic lipidosis). Do not wait and watch, ring today. **Yellow gums, eyes or skin (jaundice). Staring into space, circling, pressing the head into a wall, disorientation or a seizure** can be the brain being poisoned by a struggling liver (hepatic encephalopathy); it is easily mistaken for epilepsy and needs a vet now. **Bruising, or bleeding that will not stop. A swollen, tight, fluid-filled belly** that has come up quickly. **Collapse or extreme weakness.**

Why these are the emergencies: the liver clears toxins, makes the proteins that stop bleeding, and clears the yellow pigment bilirubin. When those jobs fail you see the brain signs, the bleeding and the jaundice above, which is why they cannot wait.

RING TODAY OR TOMORROW: GET A RECHECK BOOKED

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| ☐ Off food, or clearly eating less, for a day or two (in a dog; in a cat see the red box above) | ☐ Being sick or off colour, more than a one-off |
| ☐ Drinking and weeing noticeably more than usual | ☐ Low, flat, or not themselves for several days |
| ☐ Weight quietly dropping, or the belly looking rounder | ☐ Pale or clay-coloured droppings, or unusually dark urine |

A GENTLE DAILY ONCE-OVER

You do not need to hover, but a five-second glance while you fuss them catches most of this early. Lift a lip and check the gums are a healthy pink, not yellow or pale. Notice whether the meal went down with the usual enthusiasm. Watch how they move and settle. Trust the "something is off" feeling: you know your pet better than any number does.

WHEN YOU CALL, HAVE THIS READY

It helps your vet triage fast: which sign you have seen and when it started, whether your pet is eating and drinking, the colour of the gums, and any liver diagnosis, recent bloods or medicines already on the go. A short phone video of any wobble, circling or staring is worth a great deal, because those spells are rarely happening in the consult room.

WHAT I'VE NOTICED (DATE, SIGN, EATING YES/NO)

Written and reviewed by Dr Alastair Greenway MRCVS and Claire Greenway BVM&S MRCVS. This sheet explains and records. It does not diagnose or prescribe. Always follow your own vet's instructions.

How to use. Keep this on the fridge. The red box is for the genuine emergencies; the checklist below it earns a prompt recheck. If you are ever unsure which list a sign belongs to, treat it as the more urgent one and phone. This sheet guides; it does not diagnose.

A CAT THAT STOPS EATING IS AN EMERGENCY, NOT A WAIT-AND-SEE