

## Book review

### Caring for a cat with kidney failure

*Sarah Caney, Edinburgh: Cat Professional Ltd, 2008. 58 pages, price £9.99 paperback, £7 pdf download. Also available in German, price £10 pdf download.*

This beautifully presented and illustrated book aims to inform and support the cat owner faced with the diagnosis of renal failure in their cat. It will also be a useful resource for veterinary nurses and small animal practitioners, providing a concise overview of all aspects of the diagnosis and management of kidney failure, couched in terms that are accessible to the non-veterinarian.

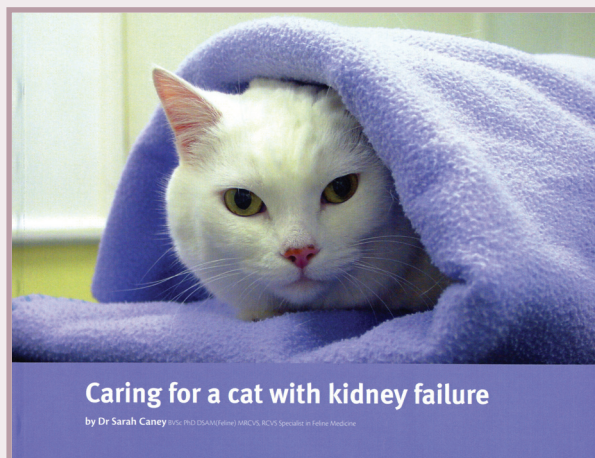
The book is divided into five sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the issues that are faced by owners when their cat develops renal disease.

Section 1 discusses 'the emotional side of things', helping owners to deal with their distress and their concerns as to what the future holds for their cat. Without minimising the severity and significance of the diagnosis, it encourages owners to work with their vets to manage the condition, and provides reassurance that with appropriate care and treatment many cats with chronic renal failure can enjoy a good quality of life for some years to come. For many owners this may be the most useful chapter in the book, offering hope but without raising unrealistic expectations.

Section 2, 'explaining the science of kidney failure', describes in some detail normal renal function, causes of acute and chronic renal failure, and the clinical signs that owners may see in their cat. It goes on to describe the diagnostic tests that might be employed in investigating their cat's condition, explaining their significance with regard to developing an appropriate treatment plan for the cat. This section may

provide more detail than some owners require, but the excellent advice on encouraging cats to accept a change of diet, ways to encourage increased water intake, and practical tips on administering medications will be invaluable for most readers.

Section 3 provides 'a case illustration', briefly describing the story of a young cat whose renal disease has been successfully



managed using many of the treatments discussed in section 2.

Section 4, 'discussing your cat with your vet', encourages communication and a good working relationship between the owner and their veterinary practice, and encourages open discussion of the owner's wishes in terms of how involved treatment should be, their financial situation and their hopes and expectations.

Section 5 – 'knowing when to say goodbye' – tackles the emotional issues that are associated with making the decision to put a loved pet to sleep. The list of quality of life indicators will be particularly helpful

for many owners faced with caring for a cat with terminal illness, and the description of euthanasia should demystify the process and allay anxiety as to what is involved. Finally a short section on coping with bereavement is included. The chapter is written in simple and direct language, but with sympathy and understanding, and there is a list of further contacts should the owner require more in-depth support.

Over all this is a well written, sympathetic but authoritative summary of the key aspects of caring for a cat with kidney failure, and will be welcome reading for those owners who need to understand their pet's disease in more depth. It aims to support the veterinary surgeon in their recommendations for diagnostic tests and treatment options, but covers some therapeutic options for more severely affected cats that many practices may not yet routinely offer, such as subcutaneous fluid therapy and erythropoietin injections. As such, it will be a useful resource for small animal practices, who may then recommend it to their clients when the diagnosis of renal failure has been made.

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❖ Also available in this series is 'Caring for a blind cat', by Natasha Mitchell, published August 2008.

