Frequently Asked Questions

Practical

How do I order the test?
To order the test login into your Texas A&M GI Lab account or if you are not yet a customer set up an account at **https://vetmed.tamu.edu/gilab/**

Enquiries can be sent to **gilab@cvm.tamu.edu** or you may call 979-862-2861

How do I process the sample?
The sample can be drawn from a peripheral or jugular vein. The sample should be collected in an EDTA (lavender top) tube and centrifuged at 1600xg (the "blood" spin) for 10 minutes within one-hour of collection. The plasma should be pulled off and placed in a sterile red top (no additive) tube or cryovial for shipping. Please be careful not to disrupt the buffy coat while pulling off the plasma portion of the sample. The animal should be fasted for 4 hours prior to collection. Reduced Fed-Ex is available through the GI Lab website and samples should be sent on ice overnight.
NOTE: the GI Lab is only open to accept samples Monday to Friday so please only ship overnight Sunday thru to Thursday.

What kind of tubes can I send the plasma sample in?
The plasma needs to be sent in a clean tube (no additives). This could be a red top tube, cryovial, or top test tube.

What is the minimal required volume of plasma for the assay?
Though we prefer a larger sample in case repeated assays are needed, the minimum volume requirement for the assay is 0.5 mL of plasma. (smaller volumes may be accepted on a case-by-case basis).

What if I let the tube sit for more than 60 minutes before spinning?
This will likely falsely increase the nucleosome levels in the sample. Please redraw the sample and spin it down at 3000g for 10 minutes within 60 minutes of the blood draw.

Can I use serum instead of plasma?
Ideally the test should be performed on plasma and we do not recommend the use of serum as nucleosome levels are much less stable in serum. However, if serum is the only thing that you have the test can be performed but the sample MUST be centrifuged within 20 minutes of the blood draw and the serum removed immediately. Serum levels are often slightly higher than plasma levels, so if your patient has a result in the moderate risk zone, then you may need to retest the patient using plasma to confirm the mild elevation in nucleosomes.

What if my sample is hemolyzed after centrifugation?
Mild or moderate hemolysis will not interfere with the test. In humans, haemoglobin levels of 500 mg/dL were shown to not interfere with the assay. However, if you sample has 3+ or higher hemolysis you may want to redraw a new sample.

When can I expect the results?
Within 3 business days.

Do you accept samples over the weekend?
The GI Lab does not accept samples over the weekend. Please only ship overnight on ice Sunday through to Thursday.

Clinical

When should I have my dog tested?
The Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test is best suited to be used with the annual wellness check for older dogs (7 years and older) and can also be a complementary test for younger dogs (4 years and older) with an increased risk for developing cancer in their lifetimes such as, Golden Retriever, Labrador Retriever, French Bulldog, Boxer, Beagle, German Shepherd, Bernese Mountain Dog, Siberian Husky, Rottweiler, Great Dane, Irish Wolfhound, Scottish Deerhound, Mastiff, Flat Coated Retriever.

What does the Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test Measure?
The Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test measures the level of nucleosomes that are circulating in the blood. When a patient has cancer, nucleosomes from those cancer cells are released into the blood and can be measured using antibodies that are specific to nucleosomes.

Is there any risk to having this test done?
One of the advantages to the Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test is that it is non-invasive, only requiring a peripheral blood draw. Since it is only a blood draw there is no significant risk to the dog and no required down time.

Will this test tell me what kind of cancer my dog has?
No, the release of nucleosomes into the blood is common to many different types of cancers. Additional tests are necessary to diagnose cancer and determine the source of the circulating nucleosomes.

What types of cancer has the Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test been able to detect?
The Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test can detect cancers such as lymphoma and hemangiosarcoma, even at early stages. Preliminary data suggests that the Nu.Q® Vet Cancer Screening Test can also detect some instances of Mast Cell tumors, malignant melanomas and Histiocytic Sarcoma.

Can I run this test on a sick patient or does the patient need to be healthy?
Inflammatory diseases such as immune mediated disease, systemic inflammation, sepsis and trauma can also cause elevated nucleosome levels. This test will not differentiate between patients sick with systemic inflammatory mediated illness from those sick with cancer.. For this reason, we do not recommend running the test in patients that could have these types of diseases. However, the test may be run in dogs without systemic inflammation but with other illness such as hypothyroidism, renal disease, osteoarthritis, mild or moderate pyoderma or other such minor illnesses.

Can I still use the sample if the patient has not been fasted?
Dogs who have not been fasted for 4 hours may have slightly elevated levels when compared to fasted samples less than 4 hours in the same dog. If your dog has not been fasted, they may end up in the moderate risk zone even though they are healthy. If this is the case, please fast your dog for 4 hours and repeat the test at a later date. If the level remains elevated, then additional testing may be necessary.

What if I have questions about the results when I get them?
If you have any questions about the results you have received or if you would like to book a consultation with a veterinary oncologist, please email AskNu.QVet@volition.com or call the Ask Nu.Q® Vet Hotline on 979-709-2348.