

1 **Diagnostic Laparotomies**

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3 We would like to thank Dr Northworthy for his letter commenting on our recent publication,¹ and for drawing
4 parallels with his recent work which likely underwent peer review at the same time.² Although there has recently
5 been controversy in how best to investigate feline gastrointestinal signs, with many favouring endoscopy, it appears
6 that we are now reaching a consensus that exploratory coeliotomy is preferable, even though it may be more
7 expensive and invasive. Thus, the approach to cats with chronic gastrointestinal signs should rightly differ from that
8 in dogs, where endoscopy still has its place.

9 Dr Northworthy's earlier work also helps to dispel a second dogma, that intestinal biopsy in cats is associated with a
10 high risk of complications including those which may be fatal. This opinion is partly based upon the earlier work of
11 Shales et al,³ which highlighted the risk of complications when performing this procedure in dogs. Whilst this work
12 may well accurately reflect the likely risks for the canine species, it provides yet another example of why cats are
13 not small dogs!

14 Finally, we would like to agree with with Dr Northworthy's comments that old age should not necessarily be a
15 reason for a veterinarian to avoid performing an exploratory coeliotomy. Nonetheless, the advantages and
16 disadvantages should always be considered and discussed with the owner before proceeding. Furthermore, senior
17 cats should be carefully supported in the post-operative period paying careful consideration to the appropriate use of
18 analgesia and to meeting nutritional requirements.

19 Many thanks once again for the positive comments on our work.

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