



# CARDIAC (HEART) DISEASE

## *WHAT IS CARDIAC DISEASE?:*

Cardiac disease is a broad term used to describe any disease condition affecting the heart. Many different conditions exist, ranging from mild to severe and conditions can progress over time from causing few clinical signs to causing severe problems and in some cases even death. Cardiac disease can be congenital - meaning your pet was born with the condition, or acquired - meaning they developed the condition later in life.

## *SIGNS OF CARDIAC DISEASE:*

The signs seen with cardiac disease are similar for most heart conditions because they are the result of the heart not performing as well as it should. Often your veterinarian will diagnose a problem with your pet's heart because they have heard either a change in rhythm, or a 'heart murmur' when listening to the heart with a stethoscope. Other clinical signs we associate with heart conditions are changes in the patients breathing, bluish colouring of the gums, or swelling of the abdomen.

At home some signs that may indicate heart disease include:

- Coughing, especially at night and when lying down
- Difficulty breathing or increased effort to breathe, especially when exercising
- Exercise intolerance, weakness or lethargy
- Weight loss
- Inappetance

## *DIAGNOSIS OF THE TYPE OF CARDIAC DISEASE:*

Many different conditions of the heart often have similar clinical signs. To diagnose the actual problem in your pet, tests such as chest radiographs (x-rays), a heart ultrasound, electrocardiogram tracing (E.C.G.), and blood tests is required. Sometimes sedation is required so that the pet lies still for the various tests. Ultrasound of the heart (known as an echocardiogram) is often the most valuable test.

## *TREATMENT OF CARDIAC DISEASE:*

Some conditions causing cardiac disease can be treated surgically, but most are treated medically. Medical treatment is generally lifelong and aims to reduce the work load (stress) placed on the heart and to improve your pet's quality of life. Many conditions will progress even with treatment so monitoring both at home and with your vet is required to ensure optimal treatment is maintained.

If you have any concerns about your pet or have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

