

HEART DISEASE



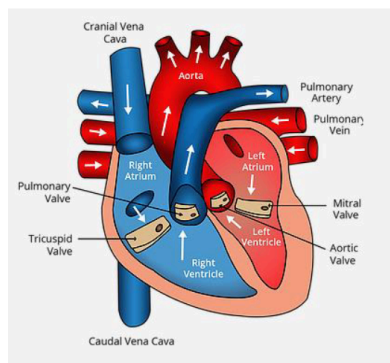
Heart Disease in Pets

There are different problems that can affect the heart just like in people. This fact sheet will outline the most common ones we see in practice.

Heart disease can be picked up at a routine appointment when the vet listens to your pet's heart. Your vet may detect a heart murmur (caused by abnormal blood flow in the heart) or an arrhythmia (irregular heart beat). Heart disease can be congenital (an animal is born with a heart defect) or acquired (develops with age)

Signs of heart disease include coughing, exercise intolerance, increased breathing rate and effort. Further evaluation of heart disease will involve an ultrasound scan (echocardiography), chest X-rays, ECGs and sometimes specific blood tests. As well as helping with the diagnosis these tests allow us to tailor the treatment plan specifically

Owners should monitor for the signs mentioned above. In cats an increased breathing rate or effort including panting is a warning sign. In dogs owners may pick up a cough or decreased energy levels on walks. In these cases please contact us for an appointment.



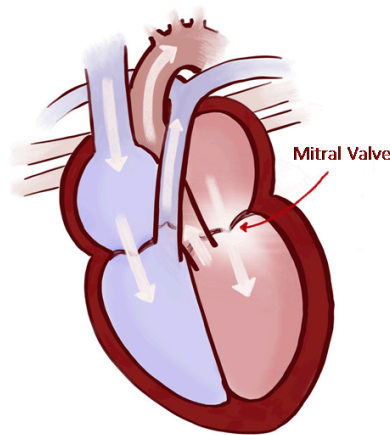
Common Heart Disease in Dogs

Mitral Valve Disease (MVD)

Approximately 1/10 dogs will develop some form of heart disease in their lifetime and 80% of these will have MVD. It is most commonly found in small middle aged dogs and certain breeds are more commonly affected such as Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Miniature poodles, Shih Tzu, Maltese, Chihuahua, Cocker Spaniels.

It is caused by a leaky valve in on the left side of the heart. This leads to an reduced output and backing up of blood into the pulmonary (lung) system. This consequently can lead to stretching of the left heart chamber and eventually fluid in the lungs.

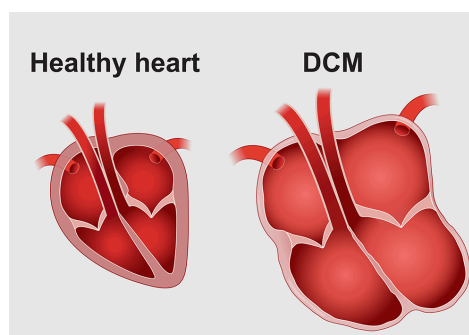
If MVD is suspected we would recommend a heart scan to diagnose the disease and take some measurements. In cases where there are significant changes to the heart we would then recommend your dog starts on heart medication. There is good evidence that early treatment can prevent/delay the onset of heart failure (www.epictrial.com)



Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)

This disease most commonly affects medium to large breed dogs, such as Dobermans, Spaniels, Boxers, Irish Setters, German Shepherds, Great Danes, St Bernards and Irish Wolfhounds.

The heart muscle weakens and thins which causes the heart to become enlarged and floppy. This can lead to heart failure and arrhythmia. A scan and ECG is generally diagnostic and can help with specific treatment planning. Quite often multiple treatments are required to improve the “pump” function, treat heart failure and manage any arrhythmia.



Common Heart Disease in Cats

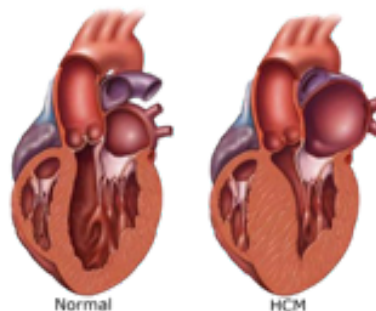
Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM)

This disease predominantly affects cats and is caused by thickening of the heart muscle and is commonly seen in pedigree cats.

This is most commonly picked up at an examination with a heart murmur or arrhythmia although some cats may have neither of these and simply present in heart failure.

Blood tests can be carried out to help with the diagnosis of HCM and genetic testing can be useful in some breeds

Treatment is generally based on managing heart failure as little can be done to prevent the progress of disease which can be very variable . Medications may be recommended to prevent clots forming in the heart and travelling to other places in the body. This can be life threatening.



Further Reading

MVD- <https://www.epictrial.com/>

DCM- <https://www.vetmedin.co.uk/large-dogs>

HCM- <https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-health/cardiomyopathy-heart-disease-cats>