

Heart Disease



If you have any further queries regarding the welfare of your pet, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff

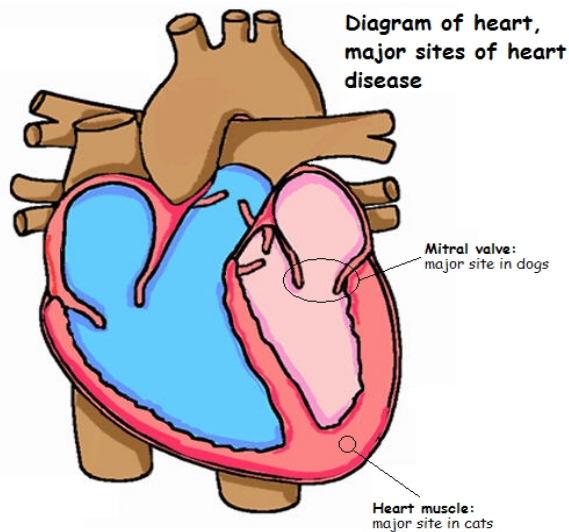
We are happy to assist!

What is heart disease?

Heart disease includes all disorders which impair the function and structure of the heart. It affects more than one in ten pets.

There are two main types of heart disease:

- **Chronic valvular disease**, in which a defective valve reduces the efficiency of the heart pumping blood, this is by far the major heart disorder in dogs.
- **Myocardial disease**, in which changes in the heart muscles result in the heart pumping less efficiently. Myocardial disease is the most common heart disorder of cats.



Heart disease left untreated develops into heart failure where the heart becomes unable to pump enough blood to supply the body tissues with adequate oxygen and nutrients.

What are the signs of heart disease?

The following are signs that may develop in a pet with heart disease:

- Lethargy and weakness
- Fainting and collapse
- Reduced ability to exercise
- Difficulty in breathing e.g. rapid and weezing
- Frequent coughing
- Abdominal swelling
- Reduced appetite
- Weight loss
- Partial paralysis of the hind legs



Initially signs of heart disease may not be obvious, only becoming pronounced as the disease progresses. If you are in any doubt, please consult your veterinary surgeon.

How is heart disease diagnosed?

Regular visits to your veterinary practice will help your vet monitor your pet's health. The physical examination will include checking the pulse and listening to the heart with a stethoscope. If heart disease is suspected your vet may advise other diagnostic procedures, these include:

- **Radiography** - x-rays can reveal changes in the size, shape and position of the heart, and any build up of fluid in the chest.
- **Electrocardiography** - this records the electrical currents generated by the heart to determine rhythm and provide other information about its function.
- **Echocardiography** - this technique uses ultrasound to record the position and movement of structures in the heart and demonstrate any deformities, for example, in the heart valves.
- **Measurement of blood pressure** - Although not as easy to perform as in humans, instruments have been developed to measure the blood pressure of your pet.

Control and management

In the long term, heart disease may be managed effectively using appropriate medication, lifestyle changes (e.g. regulating exercise) and special nutrition. These are often sufficient to allow pets to lead a relatively normal life.

Your vet will need to examine your pet regularly to make sure s/he is responding appropriately to the medication, diet and lifestyle changes. If you have any queries or would like to know more, please do not hesitate to contact the practice.