

Heart Disease Work-up

Heart Disease can range from mild to life threatening, and there are several different types. Here are the steps we recommend to diagnose and treat your pet's heart problem.

Stage 1: Your pet has an audible heart murmur or other signs of heart disease, but no cough, exercise intolerance or other symptoms of illness.

Chest X-rays, 2 views, usual cost less than \$125-150. A blood pressure reading may also be recommended, at least once a year.

Blood chemistry screen and urinalysis to rule out kidney or liver disease and diabetes, which can contribute to heart disease, if not already done. Depending on which screening tests we select this will generally be \$85-120. Some of our health care packages also include blood tests, urinalysis and x-rays.

Moderately Low Sodium diet to control blood pressure.

We have two brands of prescription food you can use. They come in dry or canned versions. Or we have a recipe for a homemade food you can mix yourself. Regular dog and cat foods have sodium levels many times higher than is recommended with heart disease. **CHANGING FOODS PROLONGS LIFE EXPECTANCY OF PETS WITH HEART DISEASE BY ABOUT TWO YEARS.**

Dental care as needed

The most important contributing factor in heart disease is infection in the mouth. Regular dental cleanings are extremely important to control heart disease.

Weight control

The more overweight the pet, the harder the heart has to work. Weight control is very important to keep your pet comfortable as long as possible, and helps lessen the severity of symptoms.

If heart enlargement, pulmonary edema or blood test abnormalities are found on testing, medication may also be needed. The cost varies depending on the medication needed and the size of the pet.

Heart disease usually slowly progresses with age. We recommend repeating the chest x-rays and blood testing at least on an annual basis. As the disease progresses, exams and testing will be required more than once a year.

Stage II: Cough, fluid build-up, exercise intolerance or abnormal heart rate or rhythm:

Chest X-rays, 2 views, usually about \$125-150. A blood pressure may also be recommended.

Electrocardiogram (ECG) to evaluate heart function and rhythm. The cost is about \$35. Follow up electrocardiograms may be necessary to evaluate response to treatment. Office Visit and Recheck Exam fees may also be charged for follow up visits.

Blood screening, including a complete blood count (CBC), a chemistry panel, electrolyte panel and urinalysis should be done at annually. This test rules out kidney or liver disease and diabetes, which can contribute to heart disease. With advancing heart disease poor circulation frequently leads to organ dysfunction, so it is common to find some abnormalities on blood or urine screening. This screening costs about \$100-150. Some of our health care packages include blood and urine testing, x-rays and ECG.

Low sodium diet to control blood pressure

We have two brands of prescription food you can use. They come in dry or canned versions. Or we have a recipe for homemade food you can mix yourself. Regular dog and cat foods have sodium levels many times higher than is recommended with heart disease. **CHANGING FOODS PROLONGS LIFE EXPECTANCY OF PETS WITH HEART DISEASE BY ABOUT 2 YEARS IF THE DISEASE IS DIAGNOSED BEFORE SEVERE DAMAGE HAS OCCURRED.**

Dental care as needed

The most important contributing factor in heart disease is infection in the mouth. Regular dental cleanings are extremely important to control heart disease. Once your pet's heart disease has been controlled with medications, anesthesia for dentistry is generally safe until the disease reaches a very advanced stage.

Weight Control

The more overweight the pet, the harder the heart must work. Weight control is very important to keep your pet comfortable as long as possible.

Medication as needed, depending on tests results, and in some cases an echocardiogram may be recommended.

Once your pet's heart condition is under control, we recommend semi-annual recheck examinations. Usually chest x-rays will be done at these visits. Blood testing should be repeated at least annually.