



Green Pastures
VETERINARY CENTRE

Cats with heart murmurs

What is a heart murmur?

The vet has heard a 'heart murmur' when listening to your cat's chest with a stethoscope. It is a whooshing noise, due to turbulent blood flow. A murmur is graded from 1-6, with 1 being the quietest. It is often the first sign we notice that a cat has possible structural heart disease such as leaky valves. Animals can also develop heart murmurs if they are anaemic. Cats with heart disease can be without symptoms for many years before they develop 'heart failure'. If a cat, for example, has leaky heart valves, the heart has to work harder to try and function efficiently. The heart is a muscle, so it will get bigger if it is working harder. An enlarged heart can press on the wind pipe and can cause coughing. Cats with heart disease will also be predisposed to developing blood clots.

What does it mean to be in heart failure?

It is where the heart cannot cope with maintaining the circulation of blood to the tissues. We then see cats with signs of not getting enough oxygen to their muscles, such as not wanting to exercise, lethargy, collapse or signs of fluid leaking out of the circulation and in to the lungs (coughing/breathing difficulties) or into the abdomen (distended abdomen and poor appetite). Sometimes heart failure can happen very quickly without obvious preceding signs. Heart failure is a rapidly progressing condition. The sooner heart failure is recognised, the more likely we are in a position to be able to stabilise the condition with medication. If left untreated, heart failure will result in death.

What do I do from here?

We recommend, if your cat is confirmed to have a heart murmur that we try to determine the cause of the murmur. We then stage the heart disease and assess the risk of your cat developing heart failure.

- **Blood pressure monitoring**
- **Cardiac blood profile (general health profile + heart enzyme proBNP)**
- **Vet taking blood fee**
- **Ultrasound scan of the heart**
- **Results consultation the following week**

What happens while your cat is with us?

We will take you through our consent form and discuss the procedure with you. This is your opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. Following this, your cat will be settled into their bed in our cat only ward with calming pheromone support and given time to relax after their journey to Green Pastures. Once settled, they will then have their blood pressure taken. If this is tolerated well, your cat will then have a blood sample taken. This includes clipping a small area of fur from the neck, numbing the area with local anaesthetic cream, collecting the blood sample and testing in-house before consideration to send to our external laboratory. An ultrasound scan will then be carried out next. To ensure your cat is calm and happy throughout the day we will go at their pace, with plenty of rest breaks between procedures as needed. Once everything has been completed a discharge appointment will then be made to collect your pet at a time that is suitable for you. A results consultation will be organised upon collection.

Important information: Please do not feed your cat **after 8pm** the night before their procedure. Please do not give them anything to eat the morning of their procedures. Water should be left available for them overnight.

In most patients we are able to do the above tests without sedation but sometimes very nervous or wriggly pets may need a light sedation, at an additional cost, to help them cope, and for us to receive more accurate results.

Please ensure you are available on the day of your cat's procedure to be contacted if necessary.

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Prices correct as of Jan 2022