



Green Pastures
VETERINARY CENTRE

Dogs with heart murmurs

What is a heart murmur?

The vet has heard a 'heart murmur' when listening to your dog'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 dog has possible structural heart disease such as leaky valves. Animals can also develop heart murmurs if that are anaemic. Dogs with heart disease can be without symptoms for many years before they develop 'heart failure'. If a dog, for example, has leaky heart valves, the heart has to work harder to try and function sufficiently. 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.

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 dogs 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 dog 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 dog developing heart failure.

- **Conscious chest X-Ray**
- **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 dog 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 dog will be settled into their bed in our dog 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 dog 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 sending it on to our external lab. An ultrasound scan and x-ray will also be taken. To ensure your dog 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: Feeding pre op; Allow access to water at all times. Your dog will need to be starved. A small breakfast can be given as long as it is before 7 am.

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

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Prices correct as of Jan 2022