

# Heart Disease in Dogs and Cats



## What is Heart Disease?

“Heart Disease” is a general term that could refer to any problem with the heart.

## Causes of Heart Disease

- Breed and genetics
- Age related degeneration
- Another underlying medical condition
- Diet

## Signs to watch for

- Reduced energy level
- Fainting or collapse
- Difficulty breathing
- Coughing
- Reduced appetite

## Diagnosis

- **Listening to the heart** – this tells the vet whether or not a heart murmur is present, but does not give any information about the structure or function of the heart
- **Radiographs** – useful for diagnosing heart failure, but not the underlying heart condition
- **Echocardiogram** – this is an ultrasound of the heart. This is a very valuable referral diagnostic tool that tells us about heart structure and function.
- **ECG** – this tells us about how electrical impulses are passed through the heart
- **Bloodwork** – your vet may choose to run general bloodwork, or specific tests to learn more about the nature of your pet’s condition

## Treatment

Depending on the cause and severity of your pet’s condition:

- No treatment, but monitor at home for clinical signs
- Medication to control early stages of disease
- Medication to manage heart failure

## Special Note: Grain Free Diets and DCM



In 2018 the FDA released a statement stating that grain free pet foods seem to be associated with pets developing Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM). Although the details of this association are still poorly understood, the current recommendation is to avoid feeding grain-free diets for pets that can tolerate it.