



Congestive Heart Disease (CHF)

Congestive heart disease is a common condition seen in older dogs that is usually caused by a valvular disorder, resulting in congestion and fluid retention in the lungs, making oxygen exchange more difficult. Early clinical signs associated with heart disease are an increase in breathing rate and effort even at rest, cough, exercise intolerance, lethargy, weakness. In severe cases patient's experience sudden collapse or fainting (syncope), which can look similar to a seizure. Management of this disease is primarily through medications to reduce the excess fluid retention on the lungs, increase heart contractility, and regulation of blood pressure that then results in a reduced work load on the heart. Animals with CHF need to remain on heart medications for the rest of their life, as this slows/prevents progression of the disease. We recommend taking chest x-rays every 6-12 months to re-evaluate the heart and lung and monitor for progression.

As long as the pet's cough is improving while on these medications, we will want to recheck in 1 month. If the cough is not improving over the next week, please call. Because congestive heart disease is a progressive process, we usually need to increase the dosage of furosemide (Lasix) as time goes on. Please call if the pet's cough starts to return once improved. As long as your pet is doing well, please refill the medications when you get low

Medications often used for CHF:

Furosemide (Lasix®)

Pimobendan (Vetmedin®)

Spironolactone and Benazepril (Cardalis)

A consultation with a cardiologist is recommended.

Below is a list of cardiology specialists locally to our area:

Portland Veterinary Cardiology, Portland, OR (503) 869-1136

Heart of Oregon Veterinary Cardiology, Portland, OR (971) 727-3059

Cardiology Northwest, Tualatin, OR (503) 246-9689

Pacific Northwest Pet ER and Specialty Center, Vancouver, WA (360) 635-5302