



Monthly Mash Up

Heart of the Matter

As it's the month of love we thought we'd use it as an opportunity to raise awareness of one of your pet's most vital of organs, the heart! Part of the routine healthcare of your pet is to ensure that they receive regular health checks. It allows for potential health issues to be identified early so that steps can be taken to monitor or manage them before they become a threat to your pet. It also increases the chances of not only a longer life with your pet but a better quality of life too!



Dogs and Heart Disease

The most common form of heart disease in dogs is "mitral valve disease" (MVD). It can affect all breeds of dog but is more common in small and medium sized dogs. MVD is when the valves become thick, lumpy and distorted which affects how they work.

The first sign that there might be a problem usually comes from the detection of a heart murmur during a routine health check. When there is a problem with the valves of the heart it affects how the blood flows through the chambers and the sound it makes is different to that of normal blood flow. This is what the vet will hear when they listen to your dog's heart.



You can visit the news section of our website to access two recordings; one of a normal heart beat and one of a heart murmur.

Knowing what is normal for your dog is really important so you can seek advice and care for them as soon as possible when you notice any change. One really useful "norm" to be aware of is your dog's breathing rate as an increase or decrease could be a sign of illness or disease.

But how would you know how to measure your dog's breathing rate? There's a really useful app available for your mobile device which will explain how to measure your dog's breathing rate and to record the result so you can build up a history of what is normal for your dog. This is NOT a diagnostic tool so if you have any concerns about your dog's health, contact your vet.

Scan the QR code to access the app



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Cats and Heart Disease



Heart disease in cats tends to be well established before there are any signs that there is an issue. This is mainly because cats are masters of hiding any signs of ill health or pain that might show them to be weak and easily preyed upon. It's in their DNA but it makes it REALLY hard for owners to know that something might be wrong.

As with dogs, most health issues are usually picked up through a routine health check so it's important that you bring your cat for regular checks.

There are several types of heart disease that affect cats but the most common is "hypertrophic cardiomyopathy" (HCM). This is where physical changes in the thickness of the muscular wall reduces the volume of blood within the heart and as a result prevents the heart muscle from relaxing properly between contractions. Early detection is important as it gives us a much better chance of managing the disease conservatively, helping to slow down the progression of the disease.

The underlying causes of heart disease in cats is unknown but some can be linked to other disease such as an overactive thyroid, a nutritional deficiency or can even be hereditary or genetic.

Rabbits and Heart Disease

Rabbits can also be affected by heart disease and the cause of many heart problems is usually due to a diet too rich in fat and/or a lack of exercise.

It's a REALLY difficult disease to detect in a rabbit as symptoms are quite generalised. The disease is usually in the late stages as a result, when symptoms are much more obvious.

Larger breeds such as the French Lop and Continental Giant, have a shorter lifespan so are considered as senior as early as 3-4 years old so may develop a heart condition fairly early on. Small breeds such as the Netherland Dwarf may not be considered senior until they are 8 so development of the disease may be much later.



Diagnostics

We have many tools and services at our disposal to help diagnose illness and disease that affect your pet. These help us to identify and improve understanding of the issues affecting your pet and is integral to the development of a treatment plan.

One of the key pieces of diagnostic equipment we use is an ultra-sound scanner which is used regularly here at Rowan for the diagnosis of heart disease in our patients. We are currently offering this service for less than half price (£62.50) for any dogs who are diagnosed with a heart murmur.



This funky machine is not just a one trick pony though! It can also be used to check how many babies your pet might be having, scan internal organs such as the heart, liver, kidneys and spleen and check for masses or obstructions. It's a great tool for seeing what is going on inside your pet!

Another string to our bow is the collaborative work we do with a specialist veterinary cardiologist, Hannah Stephenson. Hannah is a regular visitor to Rowan, providing a specialist referral service and treatment so that our clients and their pets don't have to travel.



If your pet is affected by any of the issues in this newsletter, call and speak to a member of the team on 01772 639800 or 01253 766352