

Heart Disease in Dogs

Symptoms you may spot at home

Heart disease can be difficult to spot in dogs in the early stages so annual screening for dogs with a higher risk are important. Risk factors include genetics (breed), age, diet, exercise, environmental factors, and overall health. Not all dogs will exhibit all the symptoms listed below. Some cases of heart disease may progress slowly and show mild signs, while others can become more severe and acute, leading to more pronounced symptoms. You can however, look out for the following signs at home.

Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM):

- Difficulty breathing or rapid, shallow breathing
- Increased effort whilst breathing
- Wet cough or hack
- Tiring easily during physical activity
- Restlessness or reluctance to lie down
- Fainting or collapsing episodes
- Blue tinge to tongue or gums
- Distended abdomen (enlarged belly) due to fluid accumulation
- Weakness or lethargy
- Decreased appetite

Mitral Valve Disease (MVD):

- Coughing, particularly at night or when resting
- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Reduced exercise tolerance
- Weight loss
- Fainting or collapsing episodes (in severe cases)

Aortic Stenosis (AS):

- Lethargy, exercise intolerance
- In severe cases, coughing, increased breathing effort, and open-mouth breathing.

Pericardial Effusion:

- Lethargy, weakness or collapse, typically sudden onset in under 24 hours, or over a few days.

If you notice the above signs you should contact our veterinary practice straight away.

Bringing your dog for regular check-ups with one of our vets can help to spot heart disease and other conditions early. Our vets can listen to your dog's heart and arrange further tests. Book a check up for your dog today.



Some breeds, including Boxers, Bulldogs, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Chihuahuas, Cocker Spaniels, Dachshunds, Doberman Pinschers, Golden Retrievers, Great Danes, Irish Wolfhounds, Newfoundlands & St. Bernards have a higher predisposition to certain types of heart disease.

