

Name.....

Date.....

# Effective control of **HEART DISEASE** in dogs



## ● The HEALTHY HEART

- is a muscular pump which moves blood around the circulatory system. It responds to the varying needs of the body, increasing its output during exercise and reducing output during rest.

## ● The DISEASED HEART

- fails to adapt to the varying needs of the body. We call this heart failure or heart disease. This is not the same as a heart attack which is rare in dogs.

Some dogs are born with a diseased heart, but most heart disorders develop later in life.

### Signs of Heart Disease

Signs of heart disease may include any or all of the following:-

- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Exercise intolerance
- Fainting
- Loss of appetite or depression

The two most common types of

### heart disease in dogs are :- **CHRONIC VALVULAR DISEASE**

in which the valves become distorted and inefficient. Can affect all breeds of dog but common in small breeds esp. Poodles, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Chihuahuas etc. in mid-life to old age.

### **DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY**

A disorder of heart muscle in which the wall of the left ventricle becomes thin and unable to pump blood efficiently. Large breeds of dog are affected eg. Great danes, Dobermans, St. Bernards etc often between 3 - 7 yrs of age.

- **Treatment should be started as soon as heart disease is identified.**
- **Modern medications can significantly extend life expectancy and maintain a good quality of life.**

## DIAGNOSIS of HEART DISEASE

- Clinical Examination, and regular check-up with the vet.
- Chest X-Ray , and repeat X-ray 3 mo. later.
- Blood Tests to assess general health.
- E.C.G. (Electrocardiogram), repeated as required for monitoring.
- Ultrasound examination may be necessary.

## TREATMENT of HEART DISEASE

- WEIGHT** - Overweight dogs should be slimmed to reduce the load on the heart. Use a true low-calorie prescription diet such as **Hill's R/D**. A "light" diet will not slim a dog.
- REST** is essential for dogs with congestive heart failure. Dogs with difficulty breathing should be given **total cage rest** (just like bed rest for a person). Once heart function improves, regular gentle exercise should be encouraged.
- MEDICATIONS include:-**
  1. **Vetmedin** (Cardiac stimulant) - increases the strength of the heart beat.
  2. **Fortekor** (ACE inhibitor) - dilates peripheral circulation and reduce the work the heart has to do. This can also help kidney function.
  3. **Frusemide** or **Spironolactone** (diuretics) - help clear fluid congestion. Diuretics can cause increased thirst and occasionally wetting in the house.
- LOW SALT DIET** - use a high quality diet for older dogs such as **Hill's VET ESSENTIALS Mature**. Some cases need a low salt diet such **Hill's H/D** diet.
- EMOTIONAL STABILITY** - nervous, aggressive or high-ranking dogs or those with phobias (such as fear of fireworks) may benefit from behavioural therapy to help them to be more relaxed.
- MAINTAIN GENERAL HEALTH**  
**Dental problems** - mouth infections and gingivitis must be treated.  
**Liver and kidney function** should be assessed by blood tests.  
**Chronic Bronchitis** may also be present and require treatment.

## REGULAR CHECK-UP

- Dogs on regular heart medication must be re-examined every 2 - 3 months to re-assess progress.**
- Medication can be re-dispensed for up to three months.**

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