

Heart Disease in Pets

At Franktown Animal Clinic, we understand that your pet is a beloved member of your family, and we are committed to providing the best care possible to ensure their health and well-being. Heart disease can be a serious condition, but with early detection and proper management, we can help your pet live a longer, healthier life.

What Is Heart Disease?

Heart disease in dogs and cats refers to any condition that affects the heart's ability to function properly. It can be congenital (present at birth) or acquired over time due to aging, infections, or other health issues. Left untreated, heart disease can progress to heart failure, which impacts blood circulation and overall organ function.

Stages of Heart Disease

Heart disease is typically categorized into four stages:

- **Stage A:** Pets at risk for heart disease but showing no symptoms (e.g., certain breeds prone to heart conditions).
- **Stage B:** Pets with a heart murmur but no symptoms of heart failure.
 - **B1:** No significant heart enlargement.
 - **B2:** Evidence of heart enlargement but no clinical signs.
- **Stage C:** Pets showing clinical signs of heart failure, such as coughing or difficulty breathing.
- **Stage D:** Advanced heart failure with severe symptoms that require intensive medical management.

Types of Heart Murmurs

Heart murmurs are abnormal heart sounds caused by turbulent blood flow. They are graded on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being very mild and 6 being the most severe. Murmurs can indicate underlying heart disease, but further diagnostics are needed to determine their cause and significance.

Signs to Watch for at Home

If your pet has heart disease, you may notice:

- Coughing, especially at night or after activity
- Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- Fatigue or reluctance to exercise
- Weakness or fainting
- Decreased appetite and weight loss
- Swollen belly due to fluid accumulation

You should schedule an appointment if you notice any of the symptoms above. Early detection and management can improve your pet's quality of life. If your pet has already been diagnosed with a heart condition, regular check-ups are essential.

[Turn over for more information](#)

Diagnostics for Heart Disease

At Franktown Animal Clinic, we perform several tests to evaluate heart health, including:

- **Physical exam & auscultation** – Listening to the heart for murmurs or abnormal rhythms.
- **Bloodwork** – Checking for underlying conditions that may affect the heart.
- **Chest X-rays** – Assessing heart size and detecting fluid buildup in the lungs.
- **Blood pressure measurement** – Monitoring for hypertension, which can affect the heart.

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on the type and severity of heart disease but may include:

- **Medications** – Common heart medications include:
 - **Pimobendan (Vetmedin)** – Helps the heart pump more efficiently and reduces heart strain.
 - **Furosemide (Lasix)** – A diuretic that helps remove excess fluid buildup in the lungs.
 - **Enalapril/Benazepril** – ACE inhibitors that lower blood pressure and reduce heart workload.
 - **Spirolactone** – Another diuretic that helps manage fluid retention.
 - **Sotalol or Atenolol** – Beta-blockers used to manage certain arrhythmias.
- **Dietary changes** – Low-sodium diets and specific heart-supportive supplements.
- **Exercise modifications** – Avoiding excessive activity that may strain the heart.
- **Regular monitoring** – Keeping up with veterinary check-ups to adjust treatment as needed.

Heart to Heart App

We recommend using the **Heart to Heart app**, a helpful tool for pet owners managing heart disease. This app allows you to:

- Track your pet's symptoms and progress.
- Monitor breathing rates to detect early signs of worsening heart failure.
- Set medication reminders to ensure timely treatment.
- Share updates with your veterinarian for better disease management.

Using this app can help improve your pet's quality of life and make managing heart disease easier. Ask us about how to get started with the Heart to Heart app!

Consulting a Cardiologist

Because heart disease can be complex, we recommend that pets diagnosed with heart conditions see a **veterinary cardiologist** for further testing and tailored treatment plans. A specialist can perform an echocardiogram and provide the best course of action to manage your pet's condition.

Franktown Animal Clinic

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