

## Heart conditions in cats ❤️

Heart conditions are usually noticed in general health checks. They generally show up as **heart murmurs** which can be a sign of **heart disease** (cardiomyopathy).



### Living with cats with heart murmurs

- Heart murmurs are abnormal sounds such as whooshing or swishing made by turbulent blood in or near the heart. They can be present at birth, develop later in life or occur intermittently
- Heart murmurs can be caused by many conditions. Some of these are serious and potentially life-threatening whilst others are benign, not related to a disease and may not affect your cat's health
- Murmurs are graded 1-6 and the grade is higher if the murmur is louder, more intense and detected in many locations. However the highest grade does not always mean the murmur is more serious as other factors such as the age of the animal and the presence of other clinical signs are also taken into account. This grading is also subjective and may vary between vets.
- If a cat is diagnosed with an 'innocent' heart murmur it is no cause for concern. It is not a sign of heart disease, doesn't need treatment and will not affect your cat's future health and it can often disappear between health checks or only appear when a cat is stressed

If a heart murmur is deemed serious enough, blood tests may be undertaken and further tests, X-Rays & ultrasounds may be recommended to determine the cause, which may be some form of heart disease.

### Living with cats with heart disease (cardiomyopathy)

- There are five different types of heart disease which can occur in cats. The three most common are dilated, hypertrophic and restrictive. All of these conditions are progressive and impair the flow of blood through the heart
- Many cats diagnosed with heart disease show no symptoms for many years whilst others develop symptoms and require medication on an ongoing basis.
- All cats with heart disease require monitoring appropriate to the severity of the disease

### Adopting a cat from SAFE with a heart condition

**We will discuss in detail what care, if any, our vet recommends, but it will be important for you to discuss any ongoing treatment with your own vet as soon as possible**

#### What you can do to help on an ongoing basis

In general you need to get to know your cat, to recognise what is normal and abnormal, so that you can notice any changes and take action when required

- **General monitoring** – As with any cat if you notice weight loss, lethargy, poor appetite, or increased breath rate (see below) contact your vet
- **Check your cat's breath rate** – Count how many breaths they take in 6 seconds when resting (count how many times their sides rise and fall). Multiply this number by 10 which gives you the number of breaths per minute. A resting cat's usual breath rate is 40 breaths per minute. If you notice the breath rate is consistently higher or it is rising over a number of days you need to see your vet
- **Is your cat dragging a limb?** – If you see your cat dragging or not using a limb, especially its hind legs, this is a medical emergency and you should contact your vet immediately as a blood clot could have caused a blockage

Cats are not aware that they have a heart condition and most will go on to live healthy, happy lives.

**❤️ Open your heart and it will go a long way to healing theirs! ❤️**