

My cat has a heart murmur

Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists

Stephen Collins, BVetMed, CertVC, MRCVS

Tobias Wagner, Dip ECVIM (CA), Dr.med.vet., MRCVS, European Specialist in Veterinary Cardiology

Hear disease is a very common problem in cats. Unfortunately cats often hide signs very well and heart problems are only recognised when a life threatening condition has developed. Heart murmurs, which tend to indicate presence of a heart problem in many species, are commonly noted during routine examination of a cat. However, not all cats with heart murmurs have a heart problem. An ultrasound examination of the heart (echocardiography) is required to decide if your cat has a heart problem and how serious it is.

What information can an ultrasound scan provide?

It can ...

- tell **IF** a heart disease is present
- **which** heart disease is present
- clarify how serious a heart problem is
- help to decide, if treatment is necessary
- help to give a prognosis

Is specialist knowledge needed for the scan

Ultrasound diagnosis of heart disease in asymptomatic cats is not easy as the appearance of a normal and abnormal heart can be very similar. Experience is important, to avoid making the wrong diagnosis which can lead to unnecessary medication.

Do all cats with heart disease need tablets?

Many cats with mild heart disease do not require any medication. However, if advanced heart disease is present, then certain medications are crucial and life-saving. Whether your cat needs medication and which medication will depend on results of the ultrasound scan. Cats can be difficult to medicate, therefore it is important to know if medication is really necessary.

Does my cat need sedation for the ultrasound?

No, we scan almost all cats without sedation. We reserve plenty of time for an ultrasound scan of the heart, so that your cat has time to settle and calm down.

How long does my cat need to stay in the clinic for the scan?

We often invite you to stay with your cat during the scan and therefore we see many cats as out-patients. If further tests are required, then we may need to admit your cat into the hospital for a few hours. Overnight-stays are usually not necessary for asymptomatic patients.

How often do I need to come for a recheck if heart disease is found?

This depends on the type and progression of the disease. Cats with mild disease can go a year or even longer in between rechecks. However, if we are worried that life threatening problems could develop soon, then we will recommend more frequent rechecks, usually every 3-6 months.

Information about SCVS

We provide cardiology referral services for veterinary practices in much the same way that a medical consultant would for general practitioner (GP) practices in the field of human medicine. We work closely with your vet, using our specialist knowledge, experience and equipment to help provide the best possible treatment for your pet.

We provide a 24/7 cardiology referral service to vets across Southern England, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands.

We are aware that referral services can be expensive, however there are usually lots of options for managing your pets particular problem. You can be sure we will do our best to find the best and most cost effective solution for you and your animal.