

Congestive Heart Failure

Overview

Heart failure is a condition, caused by an abnormality in the structure or the function of the heart, in which it is unable to pump normal quantities of blood to the tissues of the body. The heart is a pump, and when it fails, it often leads to fluid retention in the lung and the body cavities leading to congestive heart failure.

Dogs of any age and any breed can develop heart failure. There is a predisposition for heart failure caused by cardiomyopathy in giant canine breeds. Many older, small breed dogs develop heart failure from abnormal function of the heart valves as the valve tissue degenerates.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Congestive heart failure is generally diagnosed by chest x-rays, electrocardiogram (EKG) and an ultrasound examination of the heart (echocardiogram).
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Acute therapy may include diuretics, Nitroglycerine ointment, oxygen as well as drugs to help maintain blood pressure if needed. The majority of dogs with congestive heart failure are treated at home with a diuretic (water pill) such as furosemide (Lasix) and angiotension converting enzyme inhibitors such as enalapril or benazepril and dietary sodium restriction. Additional drugs such as Digoxin and pimobendan may also be used with certain types of disease. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Difficult breathing
- Weight loss
- Fatigue

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*