

# My cat has heart failure

## **Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists**

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**H**ear disease in cats is common but often remains undiagnosed because symptoms don't appear until disease has become very progressed. Signs of heart failure often develop very suddenly and without warning in cats. Although heart failure means that your cat has progressed heart disease, thankfully it does not mean that we can't help. Treatment tailored to the individual patient is often successful in achieving a very good quality of life for your cat.

### **Heart failure – what does that mean?**

If your cat has heart failure, then the heart is not able to pump the blood normally. This usually results in backup of fluid in the lungs or chest, causing breathing difficulty. You will therefore note an increase in breathing rate and effort. In cats, heart failure often develops suddenly and can deteriorate very quickly into a life threatening problem if not treated appropriately and immediately.

### **What can be done?**

Although there is no way to 'repair' your cats heart, there are a number of medications which will help to control heart failure and prevent complications. Although all cats with heart failure will receive a diuretic, there is a large variation in the dose required and types of additional medications which can be used. Correct diagnosis of the underlying disease and assessment of other vital parameters, such as blood pressure and kidney function, is very important when deciding what medication is best for the individual cat. Sometimes, drainage of fluid which has accumulated in the chest is required to relieve the signs.

### **Will my cat suffer or is it worth to treat?**

Heart failure is not a painful condition. The aim of treatment is to give your cat a good quality of life for as long as possible. Veterinary cardiologists are very experienced at managing heart failure in cats and can often achieve very good results even in cases with advanced disease.

### **How long will my cat live?**

This depends on several factors. The type of underlying heart disease has an influence on prognosis. Also it depends how other body functions (e.g. kidney function, blood pressure) cope with the heart disease and medication effects. Many cats with heart failure can be managed for a surprisingly long period of time if treatment is tailored well to the individual patient. Sadly some cats with serious heart failure deteriorate very rapid despite all efforts.

### **How often do I need to bring my cat to the vet?**

Treatment of heart failure needs to be monitored, as the heart problem will progress and therefore medications will need to be adjusted as time goes on. Rechecks are really important, however at our clinic, we try to keep the number of rechecks to a minimum and tailor them to the individual cat. Many cats dont like traveling. We teach cat owners how to monitor for signs of deterioration and we try to talk to you on the telephone on a regular basis, helping you to manage your cats heart disease.

### **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.