

Pre-Surgical Cardiac Murmur Information

A heart murmur is one of several types of abnormal sounds your veterinarian can hear when listening to your pet's heart with a stethoscope. Most veterinarian's grade murmurs on a scale from 1 to 6. The lower the grade, the quieter the murmur. The grade or loudness of the murmur is not necessarily related to the severity of the heart abnormality or disease causing the murmur.

Hearing a murmur is generally not a reason to panic. Many dogs and cats with murmurs live normal lives and never need any treatment for heart disease. But the only way to know for certain is to work with your veterinarian to determine the cause and severity of the cause of the murmur. The course of treatment will be determined based on the associated clinical signs.

Generally keeping teeth clean is more important with pets with heart murmurs as diseased teeth can cause the heart disease to progress, by causing infections and damage to the heart.

Q: If your pet does have "heart disease" causing the murmur, does that mean he or she cannot undergo anesthesia for the dental cleaning or other surgeries?

A: Not necessarily, as long as the heart is functioning normally. Extra precautions should be taken to ensure his or her safety before go to surgery.

1. Antibiotics: Systemic disease can cause infection of the heart valve commonly associated with dental and gum disease. Recommend patient receive antibiotics one week before surgery or dental cleaning.
2. Coenzyme Q10: 2-4mg/kg by mouth twice daily for 1-4 weeks prior to anesthesia and dental cleaning. This has cardiac antioxidant properties that helps promote heart health.
3. Pimobendan: This medication makes the heart pump harder and relaxes the blood vessels. Therefore, providing better blood flow throughout the body. Recommend starting patient on this medication 2 weeks before surgery.
4. BNP: Blood test that is a marker for heart damage. In cats this can be performed in hospital. In dogs this test needs to go the lab, and must be performed a few days prior to anesthesia.
5. Cardiac Work-up: This includes X-Rays (\$250-\$350) ECG (\$70-100) and a Cardiology consult (\$700-800) with a Cardiologist. A cardiac workup is ideal prior to anesthesia; however, can cost over \$1,000 to perform a complete workup with a cardiologist. This workup is much more important to perform is your pet's resting respiratory rate is more than 20-30 breaths per minute, or if your pet is having weight loss, coughing, or exercise intolerance.