

Heart Disease Explained

Family Matters

Hearing that your pet has heart disease can be frightening.

Many guardians immediately think the worst.

"Is my pet's heart failing?"

Fortunately, the answer is often **no**.

Many pets with heart disease continue to live happy, active lives for months or even years with appropriate monitoring and treatment.

At Amity, we believe understanding heart disease removes much of the fear surrounding it. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you understand what heart disease means and what happens next.

What Is Heart Disease?

The heart is a pump that circulates blood around the body.

Heart disease simply means that something is affecting how well that pump works.

There are many different types of heart disease.

Some affect the heart valves.

Others affect the heart muscle.

Some pets are born with heart conditions, while others develop them as they grow older.

Every condition behaves differently, which is why an accurate diagnosis is so important.

What Are the Signs?

Many pets with early heart disease show **no signs at all**.

Often, the first clue is a heart murmur heard during a routine health check.

As the disease progresses, you may notice:

- Coughing.

- Reduced exercise tolerance.
- Breathing more quickly.
- Becoming tired more easily.
- Reluctance to exercise.
- Collapse or fainting.
- Difficulty breathing.

These signs don't always mean heart disease, but they do deserve investigation.

What Is a Heart Murmur?

A heart murmur isn't a diagnosis.

It's simply an abnormal sound made as blood flows through the heart.

Some murmurs are harmless.

Others indicate underlying heart disease.

The murmur tells us **something may be happening**. It doesn't tell us exactly what.

Further investigations are often needed to understand the cause.

How Is Heart Disease Diagnosed?

Your pet's examination is only the beginning.

Depending on what we find, we may recommend:

- Chest X-rays.
- Blood pressure measurement.
- Blood tests.
- An electrocardiogram (ECG).
- A heart ultrasound (echocardiogram), usually performed by a veterinary cardiologist.

These tests allow us to understand not only whether heart disease is present, but also **which type** and how severe it is.

Does Every Pet Need Medication?

No.

One of the biggest misconceptions is that every murmur needs treatment.

Some pets simply need regular monitoring.

Others benefit from medication that helps the heart work more efficiently or reduces the workload placed upon it.

Starting medication at the right time is just as important as choosing the right medication.

Living Well With Heart Disease

Many pets with heart disease continue to enjoy an excellent quality of life.

Regular check-ups allow us to monitor progression and adjust treatment as your pet's condition changes.

Your observations at home are equally important.

If you notice increased coughing, changes in breathing, reduced energy or anything that worries you, let us know.

Looking After the Whole Family

At Amity, we know a diagnosis of heart disease affects more than just your pet.

It affects the whole family.

We'll explain every finding, discuss your options honestly and help you understand what to expect at every stage.

Because our goal isn't simply to treat a heart.

It's to help your pet continue enjoying life with the people they love.

Because they're not just your pet.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.