

Congestive Heart Failure

Congestive heart failure is a chronic condition characterized by the heart's weakened ability to pump enough blood to maintain body functions. The body fluids start to "back up" behind the heart, either in the lungs or the abdomen. Signs seen by the owner include:

- Shortness of breath
- Exercise intolerance
- Deep, dry cough
- Weight loss
- Enlarged abdomen; swollen, puffy limbs
- Cyanosis – blue discoloration of the tongue and gums
- Fainting spells

Congestive heart failure can result from disease affecting the heart valves, birth defects, infections, Heartworm disease, or degenerative disease ("old age"). Although most heart failure patients cannot be cured, many can live comfortable lives with proper medical management. This will include dietary modifications, cardiac medications, avoidance of any strenuous exercise or exertion, and maintaining a cool environment.

As time goes on, your pet will begin to show more severe signs as the heart continues to degenerate. It is impossible to estimate the life expectancy. Our major concern is making your pet as comfortable as possible so that their quality of life is maintained.

If you notice that your pet is having any difficulty breathing or coughing, please bring have your pet evaluated as soon as possible.