

Hillcrest Veterinary Clinic May 2010 E-Newsletter



Hello everybody! I hope everyone enjoyed last month's newsletter and learned something about pancreatitis. Our staff is having fun picking out the newsletter topics, designing the bulletin board in the clinic and sharing a bit about them. We sure hope you are learning something from our newsletter ideas.

This month we are going to talk about our receptionist, Shannon's idea of heart disease in canines and felines.

WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

The heart consists of four chambers, which assist in the blood flow throughout the body. It is responsible for sending blood that is low in oxygen to the lungs to receive more oxygen, then sending the oxygen-rich blood throughout the body to all the tissues in need. A series of valves in the heart separate the 4 chambers and prevent the blood from flowing where it should not. Our pets do not develop plaques in the blood vesicles of their heart (arteriosclerosis, coronary artery disease) so they do not get the heart attacks like we do.

When heart disease occurs in dogs, the mitral valve, being the most fragile, wears out first. The valve becomes blunted or rounded in shape and therefore fails to close properly. This causes a back-flow of blood, which

enlarges the heart. Chamber enlargement may in time put pressure on local structures and airways, resulting in a dry hacking cough.

When heart disease occurs in cats, it usually involves the heart muscle, not the heart valves. Symptoms of heart disease usually occur when the cat's actual heart begins to fail.

SYMPTOMS OF HEART DISEASE:

Dogs:

- Dry hacking cough
- "Wet" productive cough,
- Loss of appetite,
- Lethargy or sleeping a lot,
- Fainting or episodes of seizures

Cats:

- Weakness
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Difficulty breathing

DIAGNOSING HEART DISEASE:

Diagnoses is made by:

- Physical examination- most patients usually have a heart murmur, which can be heard during the examination.
- X-rays- are important for a couple reasons: 1.) We can determine the overall size and sometimes shape of the heart; we may also be able to evaluate if a certain chamber of the heart is enlarged. 2.) Just as important- we can determine if there are any secondary lung and windpipe changes or fluid accumulations present. The x-ray can be an important tool to also determine our progress in treating your pet.
- Electrocardiogram- The ECG or EKG will allow us to determine your pet's heart rate and, more importantly, the exact rhythm. It can pinpoint certain chamber problems as well as any conductive disturbances that may be responsible for heart disease. This test also gives us the ability to communicate with a Board Certified Cardiologist to discuss your pet's condition.
- Ultrasound- we may need to send your pet to specialists to have an echocardiogram performed. This is an ultrasound of the heart. This

test can look specifically at blood flow dynamics as well as heart muscle thickness and contractive capability (strength) of the heart. It can also be specific with valvular diseases, and can look at the sack around the heart (pericardium).

- Blood test- a blood test will be important to determine 1.) If there are any underlying conditions that may predispose your pet to heart disease (ex. Hyperthyroidism) and 2.) Will let us know if your pet will be able to utilize and metabolize the heart medications well.

All of these tests may or may not be necessary in every case. We can determine which tests are indicated to ensure the absolute best management of heart disease in your pet. Remember, the stethoscope may be the most important tool of all in evaluating heart disease.

TREATMENTS OF HEART DISEASE:

Congestive heart failure is the end result of congestive heart disease.

Treatments for CHF are:

- Diuretics- these drugs remove excess fluid and blood that have pooled in your pet's body. These drugs will make your pet more comfortable and cough less. Your pet will drink and urinate more often on these medications. Example: Lasix
- ACE inhibitors- these drugs increase the diameter of blood vessels throughout the body so the heart does not have to work so hard. They also decrease your pet's heart rate to help preserve the heart's remaining strength. Example: Enalapril
- Inodilators- these drugs increase the amount of blood that the weakened heart can pump by giving more strength to its muscle fibers. They also open up blood vessels throughout the body so the heart doesn't have to work as hard. Example: Vetmedin

It is also recommended to keep your pet's weight optimal and feed a brand name diet food. When exercising your pet, keep activity level short of what it would take to cause your pet to breath heavily, pant, or elevate the heart rate. Do exercise your pet, though; they benefit greatly from physical activity.

✓ **NEWS FLASH!!!**

Hillcrest Veterinary Clinic is pleased to provide a new revolutionary test to help assist our approach with early detection of heart disease in your dog or cat.

Pro-BNP, a cardiac biomarker that is released from the heart in an increased amount when the heart is diseased, can now be detected in the circulation. It is especially useful in management and support of heart disease treatment and can distinguish cardiac causes for coughing from primary respiratory causes.

If your pet has a chronic cough or is on heart medications, this new test may help us better manage him or her. And for a short time, from May 17th to May 29th we will offer this test for the reduced price of \$49.99. After these 2 weeks it will go to it's regular price of \$100. If you are interested, please call and make an appointment within these 2 weeks.

Dr. Tidbit by Dr. Aaron T Pollock:

Keeping with the theme of heart disease, I would like to stress the importance of the physical exam and remind all pet owners to control what they can control. Many heart diseases, like in humans, may be hereditary, genetic, or congenital. But things we can do to help prevent heart disease and lessen the severity is maintain proper diet and weight management, provide a healthy lifestyle, be cautious of, and prevent dental disease and be sure to test for and prevent heartworm disease. As with almost any disease- prevention is best, but early detection can go a long way in the treatment of heart conditions. That is why we stress the annual physical exam (at least) to give us the opportunity to look at and listen to your pet to ensure proper health.

ADOPTIONS:



This month we still have our beautiful Siamese mix kitty, Fiona. She is extremely loveable and plays well with dogs

and other cats. She has been spayed, felv/fiv tested, vaccinated, dewormed and she is ready to go!



We also have a 6-month old male tabby cat that is EXTREMELY loveable. He has been felv/fiv tested, neutered, vaccinated and ready to go.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ✓ The Annual Animal Friends Cash Bash was a success! Thank you for all who bought tickets or participated in the festivities.
- ✓ We had a good turnout for our special on fecal send out tests. We sent out 80 fecal tests and about 1/3 came back with one or more parasites. We are regularly offering that test for \$22 if you missed out and would like your pet's fecal tested. All you have to do is collect a sample and drop it off at anytime.
- ✓ There will be a pet expo going on at Mylan Park the weekend of May 14-16th. They are hosting a wide variety of pet activities that you can enjoy. Pets are welcome but they must be leashed. The Canine Adoption Center and Animal Friends will be there with animals to adopt.
- ✓ There is going to be a fun dog activity on June 24th -27th at the Greene County Fairgrounds in Waynesburg, PA. They are hosting an All-Breed show, Rally and obedience. You do not have to have your dog in the show to come out and watch. It should be a good time with other animal activities going on.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:



Hello my name is Shannon and I have been a receptionist at Hillcrest for a year now! I previously worked at a clinic in Virginia as a veterinary assistant. I love working with pets and their families. My best friend is my black lab, Scamp; he likes to take me for nice long walks. He also likes to play with his friends, Otto and Bear and everyone else.

That is all we have for this month's newsletter. If you have any questions about heart disease or would like your pet checked, please call and make an appointment or talk to one of our staff members.