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UNDERSTANDING
DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY



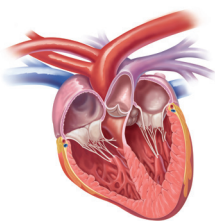
Boehringer
Ingelheim

WHAT IS DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY?

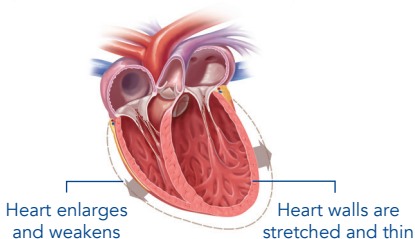
Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is the second most common type of heart disease in dogs, typically affecting medium and large sized breeds such as Dobermans, Great Danes, Cocker and Springer Spaniels, Boxers, Irish Setters, German Shepherds, St Bernards, Irish Wolfhounds, Labradors and Golden Retrievers.

In DCM, the heart stretches and becomes enlarged, and the walls of the heart (the heart muscle) are thin, weakened and floppy. As a result, the heart can't contract properly and it struggles to pump blood around the body.

NORMAL HEART



HEART WITH DCM



Dogs with DCM can often live with heart disease for months or years and appear outwardly healthy, even though the changes to their heart have already begun. However, over time, their heart deteriorates and they start to show signs that their heart isn't coping. This stage is known as heart failure. At this point the dog becomes unwell and their quality of life is affected.

Early identification of DCM is really important to ensure dogs are given treatment as soon as they need it, to improve their quality of life and survival time.

HOW IS DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY DIAGNOSED?

There are two stages of DCM; a long “silent” or asymptomatic stage in which the heart has the disease and is slowly deteriorating, but there are no outward signs of a problem; followed by a shorter stage when the heart starts to fail and the dog shows visible signs of their disease. The second shorter stage is easier to identify as dogs show some or all of the following signs:

- Breathing faster
- Difficulty breathing
- Tiredness
- Difficulty exercising
- Coughing
- Fainting / collapse
- Weight loss
- Poor appetite
- Swollen abdomen

If you notice any of these signs in your dog then you should take them to your vet. Your vet will examine your dog and may recommend some additional tests. These can include blood tests, an X-ray or ultrasound scan of their heart, or an electrocardiogram (ECG).

It is more difficult to identify dogs in the “silent” or asymptomatic stage of the disease as they show no outward signs that there is a problem with their heart. Dogs in the asymptomatic stage of DCM appear completely happy and healthy and will walk in and out of a veterinary practice for their routine vaccinations, without anyone knowing that they have a problem with their heart. However, there are specific screening tests that a vet can do to help diagnose dogs in this stage of DCM.

SCREENING TESTS TO IDENTIFY DOGS WITH SILENT DCM

For dogs that are at risk of DCM, it's important to screen them regularly to check if they are developing the disease. These dogs are those that are over 3 years old and from the following breeds:

- ♥ Doberman Pinscher
- ♥ Great Dane
- ♥ Irish Wolfhound
- ♥ Boxer
- ♥ Newfoundland
- ♥ German Shepherd Dog
- ♥ St Bernard

Screening involves performing a simple blood test to check the level of a substance called pro-BNP. High levels of pro-BNP in the blood indicate that a dog may have DCM.

If a dog has a high pro-BNP level then the next step is an ultrasound scan to look at their heart and see how well it is functioning. The ultrasound scan will enable the vet or cardiologist to diagnose whether the dog has asymptomatic DCM or not.

Normal pro-BNP

If your dog is one of the high risk breeds for DCM and has a normal pro-BNP level, there is still a possibility of them developing DCM with time. It is recommended that your vet checks your dog's heart each year.



WHAT IF MY DOG HAS DCM?

If your dog is diagnosed as having DCM, there is a lot you can do to help.

If your dog is in the silent stage of DCM, Vetmedin® has been prescribed to extend the time before your dog's heart begins to fail and to increase their survival time. Your vet can further discuss the benefits of Vetmedin® with you.

If your dog has symptoms of DCM, or is going into heart failure, your vet has prescribed Vetmedin® to help your dog's heart pump more effectively.

Additional heart medications to help control the symptoms of DCM and improve your dogs quality of life may also be recommended, including diuretics to help remove fluid from the lungs (and abdomen) that can build-up when the heart is struggling.

If your dog has DCM, it is very important that you take them for frequent check-ups with your vet and that you monitor their heart at home. (See: How do I monitor my dog's heart at home?)

How long will my dog live on Vetmedin®?

It's not easy to predict how quickly a dog will go into heart failure after being diagnosed with asymptomatic DCM or how quickly heart failure will progress in an individual dog. Your vet will monitor your dog's condition and advise you more on this.

HOW DO I MONITOR MY DOG'S HEART AT HOME?

Whether your dog is at risk of developing DCM, has asymptomatic DCM or has heart failure, it is very important that you monitor their breathing rate when they are at home as this is a very good way of detecting if their heart is struggling and treatment is needed.

When your dog is calm and resting, perhaps lying on the floor at home one evening, count the number of breaths they take in a minute. This is known as their resting respiratory rate (RRR).

Step 1



WAIT UNTIL
YOUR DOG
IS ASLEEP
OR FULLY
RESTED

Step 2



COUNT
1 BREATH FOR
EACH RISE OF
THE CHEST
FOR 1
MINUTE

Step 3



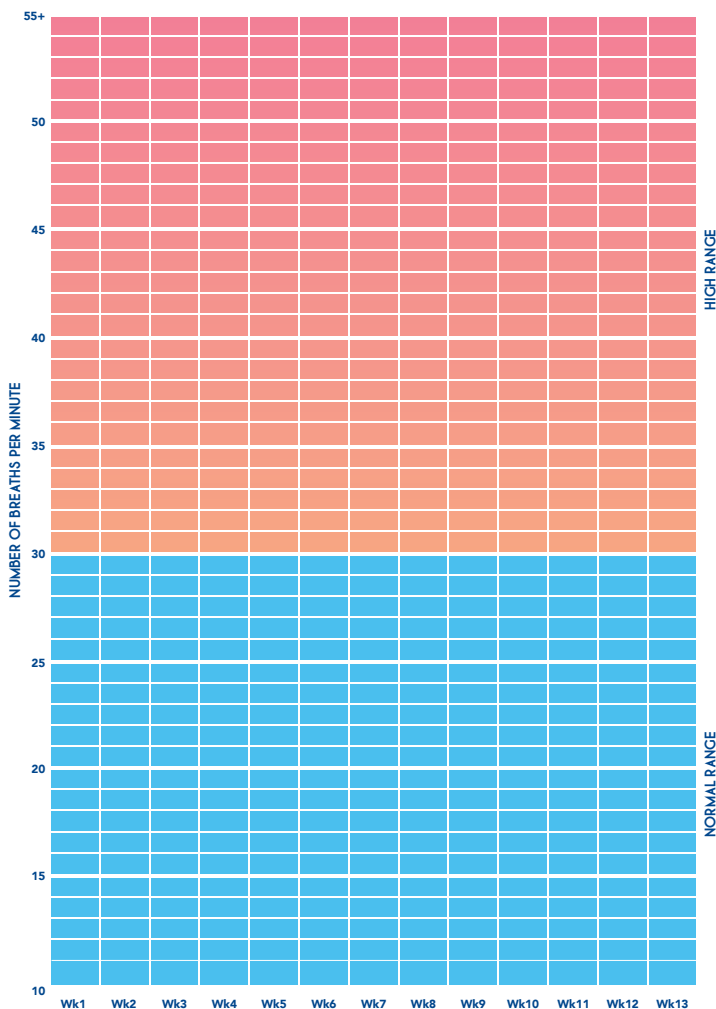
RECORD
YOUR RESULTS
ON THE GRAPH
OVERLEAF

A normal RRR is less than 30 breaths per minute. If your dog has a RRR above this or you notice that their RRR is gradually increasing (e.g. each week it goes up slightly) then this is a very early sign that your dog's heart may not be coping and should be checked by your vet.



RESTING RESPIRATORY RATE RECORD (RRR)

You can monitor your dog's RRR by measuring it each week and recording it on the chart below.



Should you need an additional chart to monitor your dog's RRR please ask your vet.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- ♥ For more information on Dilated Cardiomyopathy, pro-BNP blood testing and measuring resting respiratory rate, please speak to your vet.



IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR DOG,
PLEASE SEEK ADVICE FROM YOUR VET

For more information visit www.vetmedin.co.uk

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