

These could include an ECG (*electrocardiogram*), x-rays or an ultra-sound scan.

Additional tests may be recommended in some cases to check for any other underlying disease that may be present which might be the cause of or maybe exacerbating any heart disease that might be present.

Would my cat need any treatment?

In many cases, the underlying cause of heart disease isn't treated. However, in cases where a secondary condition, such as high blood pressure or an overactive thyroid gland is present, treatment of these conditions would be recommended as this may improve the heart function. There is also a risk of embolism (blood clot) but this risk can be reduced by adding in medication

To take advantage of regular and affordable health checks for your cat, book in for a complimentary consultation with our Head Nurse. Your cat will receive a full health check, a free urine sample, blood pressure check and nail clip (if required).



Consulting Times

Hillock Lane Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 7pm

Saturday
8.30am to 1pm



Blackpool Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 6pm

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Hillock Lane



Blackpool



Cats & Heart Disease

Rowan Veterinary Centre

"where pets come first"

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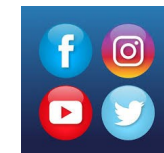
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What is heart disease?

Cardiomyopathy, more commonly known as heart disease, is any disease affecting the heart muscle itself and is the most common form of heart disease and heart failure in cats.

What diseases affect the heart muscle?

There are several, but the most common is called 'hypertrophic cardiomyopathy' (**HCM**). This is where there is an increase in the thickness of the muscular wall of the heart which reduces the volume of blood within the heart as a result. This prevents the heart muscle from relaxing properly between contractions.

'Dilated cardiomyopathy' (**DCM**) is where the muscular wall of the heart becomes thinner than usual. The heart enlarges and cannot contract effectively as a result.

Sometimes scarring of the muscular wall causes thickening, making it stiff and in-elastic. This is called 'Restrictive cardiomyopathy' (**RCM**) and prevents the heart chambers from filling normally.

Lastly, 'intermediate cardiomyopathy' (**ICM**) is where a mixture of more than one type of the diseases mentioned above, is affecting the heart at the same time.

What causes heart disease in cats?

The underlying causes of heart disease in cats is unknown but there are several potential recognised causes. The vet may need to investigate some of these in order to advise on a treatment plan. Some of the potential causes are:

- Secondary to another disease, such as an overactive thyroid gland, high blood pressure or "**Acromegaly**" which is an excessive production of growth hormone.
- Nutritional causes, such as "**Taurine**" deficiency. Taurine is an amino acid which is important for metabolising fats.
 - Lymphoma, a type of malignant tumour.
 - Exposure to toxins—some drugs may have a secondary effect on the heart
 - Hereditary causes.
 - Genetic defects (these have been recognised in breeds such as Maine Coon).

In all cases, the underlying abnormality leads to a heart that isn't functioning as it should.

How would I know if my cat has a problem?

You may not notice that your cat has heart disease. Many cats with heart disease never show any obvious signs or symptoms that they have a problem because they are so good at hiding the signs. In fact, it may only be at a critical point of the development of the disease that it becomes obvious that there is something wrong.

Because of this, it is very important that you bring your cat to the vet for regular checks, at least on an annual basis and more often as they age, so that if heart disease develops, it can be detected early and managed accordingly.

How does the vet know if my cat has heart disease?

As part of a full health check, a vet will listen to your cat's heart beat through a stethoscope. This is a very straight forward, non-invasive and quick procedure that can give the vet a good indication as to whether your cat's heart is working as it should.

Early warning signs that the vet might detect are:

- Heart murmur - this is an abnormal noise that develops because of turbulence in the flow of blood through the heart.
- Gallop rhythm—two sounds can be heard during a cycle of a heart contraction and they are as a result of heart valves closing and the relaxation of the heart. When there is significant heart disease present, a third sound can be heard and is referred to as a "gallop sound" or "gallop rhythm".
- Abnormal heart rate—heart disease can sometimes affect the rate at which the heart beats. This can be an increase in heart rate OR a decrease. In either case, it would be outside the normal range for a cat. For example, a heart rate without any effective flow of blood (a heart beat with no pulse detectable in an artery) is known as "pulse deficit", and again is abnormal for a cat.
- Cardiac rhythm disturbances—also referred to as "dysrhythmias". Cats normally have a very regular heart beat but with heart disease, interference in the normal electrical impulses that control the heart

contractions can result in disturbances in the normal rhythm.

There are other tests which can be undertaken to identify the type of heart disease a cat might have.

