

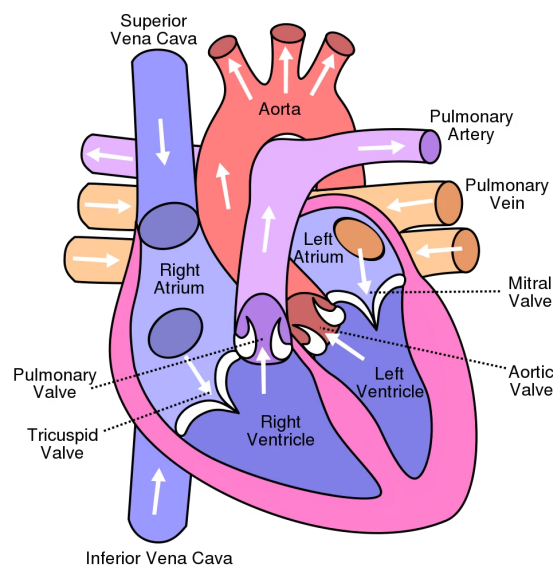
Cardiovascular Disease

There are many different processes that can lead to cardiac disease, but the clinical signs tend to follow a similar trend.

In the early stages of cardiac disease, patients will often be clinically well. They will compensate by increasing their heart rate.

As the disease progresses, changes in blood pressure coming in and out of the heart can lead to increase in heart size. Vessels in the heart also come under greater pressure and this can cause leakage of fluid into the lungs or abdominal cavity.

The overall effects of these changes are increased turbulence which can lead to additional heart sounds (murmurs) and reduction in blood flow through the heart which reduces the patients oxygen availability.



What are the clinical signs?

- Increased respiratory rate
- Heart murmur/abnormal heart rhythms
- Exercise intolerance/lethargy
- Coughing
- Panting
- Distended abdomen
- Loss of appetite
- Weakness or fainting episodes
- Paralysis of the hindlimbs

How do we evaluate Cardiovascular Disease?

A thorough history and physical examination is important to detect signs of cardiovascular disease and gives us clues as to what type of disease is most likely.

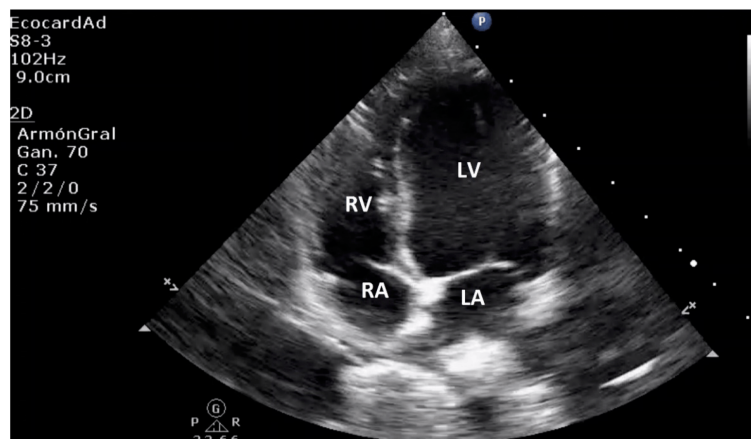
Blood tests

Cardiovascular disease can be a consequence of a primary condition (eg. hyperthyroidism) therefore it's important to take bloods for systemic disease. There are also specific blood tests that look at cardiac enzymes eg ProBNP.

Ultrasound

Echocardiography (ultrasound of the heart) is the most valuable tool for diagnosing cardiovascular disease.

It is performed with the patient conscious if possible although some may need a light sedation. It is a non-invasive procedure. It allows us to fully evaluate the heart in real time, take measurements and make decisions on treatment going forward. We have a visiting echocardiographer who is readily available at the practice should we need them.



Radiography

We also use radiography (x-rays) alongside ultrasound to further assess both the heart and the lungs. This gives us a more comprehensive overview of what stage the patient's cardiovascular disease is at.

At home

Keeping a diary at home and making videos of any changes can be very informative to the vet. We will often ask you to monitor resting respiratory rate at home, which is the number of breaths per minute. This is something that can be done daily and gives us an insight into any changes in the condition.

How do we treat cardiovascular disease?

Some diseases are amenable to surgery for example some congenital conditions. However most are medically managed. Medical treatment is aimed at reducing symptoms and reducing deterioration, sadly it is not a cure.

What is the prognosis with Cardiovascular Disease?

It is important to remember that not all cardiovascular disease results in cardiac failure. Many affected patients can lead a long and healthy life and may not require constant treatment. In other cases, starting treatment early has been proven to increase lifespan. However once cardiovascular disease is diagnosed we recommend getting your pet assessed every few months so we can track the progression of the disease and optimise treatment options.

To book in for your pet in for a health check or testing, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit www.clarohillvets.co.uk.