



## PATIENT DUCTUS ARTERIOSUS

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

The ductus arteriosus is an important blood vessel when a fetus is developing, but this duct naturally closes a few hours after birth. If this duct does not close properly after birth and remains open, it causes the disease **Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA)**.

Symptoms may be apparent in the first months of a patient's life. However, with time, it can lead to irreversible damage to the heart and signs of congestive heart failure. Symptoms include coughing, fast breathing or with effort, and exercise intolerance. **PDA** can quickly become life-threatening.

Symptoms occur most commonly during the first 2 years of life. Patients with a **PDA** will not have a normal life span unless corrected with surgery.

Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A loud, constant heart murmur is usually detected by a veterinarian at the first exam. If a heart murmur is detected, patients should be evaluated again in 2-3 weeks, as murmurs can be harmless occurrences that will resolve with natural growth. However, if there is a concern that the patient may have a **PDA**, tests are often recommended immediately.

An ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram) is the preferred choice for diagnosing heart disease.

X-rays (radiographs) are a basic tool for diagnosing heart disease but are better for determining fluid on the lungs.

### TREATMENT

Surgery is the only reliable treatment method for long-term survival. Ideally, patients with a **PDA** are selected before any symptoms are present under 6 months old. With surgery, most patients have a good prognosis with a normal life span.

If a **PDA** is not detected until later in life, surgical correction may not be enough to restore the heart to normal function.

Typically, surgery is only available at referral and teaching hospitals.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- There is no benefit to a "wait-and-see" approach once a **PDA** is detected. Elect surgery sooner rather than later.
- Sometimes the patient requires medications for congestive heart failure. Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.
- Some patients have heart murmurs at birth, which will resolve by 16 weeks of age. Your veterinarian will help determine if a **PDA** is present and provide recommendations to suit the patient.