PAW HEALTH NETWORK INC.

HEART MURMUR

ABOUT THE DISEASE

During normal function of the heart muscle and valves, each heartbeat can be distinctly heard with a lub-dub sound. A **heart murmur** is detected when these normal heart sounds are obscured by turbulence of blood inside the heart. This turbulence can be caused by muscular disease, muscular defects, valvular disease and/or valvular defects. The intensity of **heart murmurs** are often subjectively gauged by the ear, whereas objectively assessed by an ultrasound (also known as an echocardiogram).

- **Benign Murmurs**
  - While **heart murmurs** are never normal, an innocent or physiologic **heart murmur** would suggest that there is no apparent impact on the patient's health. These types of **murmurs** are often seen in puppies, are uncommon in adult dogs, and may occur in cats of any age.
- **Congenital Murmurs**
  - **Congenital murmurs** are present at birth, which may or may not be genetic. While often present at birth, sometimes these **murmurs** are not detected until later in life.
- **Acquired Murmurs**
  - **Acquired murmurs** are **murmurs** are those that patients develop later in life, often associated with a degenerative heart disease.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Preliminary diagnoses are often acquired by a veterinarian during a patient's physical examination. Chest radiographs may assist in general heart and lung findings, but an ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram) is the diagnostic of choice for ruling out the source of **heart murmurs**.

TREATMENT

In almost every case, the actual **heart murmur** is not treated. However, the underlying disease and/or secondary effects of disease are often managed on a case-by-case basis. Please see our resource on Congestive Heart Failure for additional information.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Prognosis range from excellent to grave depending on the cause of the **murmur**.
- Following a strict treatment regimen is imperative if treating the underlying cause is warranted.
- In all cases, ongoing monitoring and periodic diagnostic testing will be necessary to track the progress of the condition.