

Endocardiosis in Dogs

What is Endocardiosis?

Endocardiosis is also referred to as valve disease or insufficiency and occurs when abnormal tissue accumulates within the tricuspid or mitral heart valves (these 'atrioventricular' valves separate the atrial chambers from the ventricular chambers of the heart). This alters the physical structure of these valves, and makes them leaky, so the heart muscle needs to work harder to ensure adequate blood flow around the body.

Causes of Endocardiosis

The exact cause of endocardiosis is unknown, but it is likely to be a genetic condition as some dog breeds are more likely to develop this type of heart disease. Unfortunately, it is a degenerative condition, worsening over time.

Although any dog can be affected, endocardiosis tends to affect dogs over the age of 10, but younger dogs can also be affected. Dog breeds predisposed to endocardiosis include Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Poodles, Chihuahuas and Dachshunds.

Symptoms of Endocardiosis in Dogs

Clinical signs will vary depending on the severity of the disease but can include a heart murmur, coughing, less keen to exercise, lethargy, weakness, a distended belly, faster or more laboured breathing, and fainting.

Diagnosis and Treatment Options

The vet will perform a clinical examination, and may suggest diagnostic tests such as blood samples, X-rays, and heart scans. While a cure is not possible, there are treatment options to help manage symptoms of the disease and slow progression. The recommended treatment plan will vary depending on severity of the disease, and will be continued through life with regular check-ups to monitor your pet's health and adjust doses if necessary.

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