



Date last updated : October 2013

Obviously to hear that your pet has heart disease is worrying but here at Gatehouse with the advances in veterinary medicine we feel there are many ways to help.

The first thing to note is that there is more to helping heart disease than just medication and the vet will go through the drugs we use and their role but we hope the following background information is also of help:

#### Food and Dietary supplements:

- **Salt** – while low salt diets are important in humans they are less so in our pets. The reason being that humans suffer from coronary heart disease and any underlying high blood pressure has been shown to be a major contributing factor. However, as our pets suffer from a different form of heart disease salt is not an issue for them. Indeed reducing salt may make the food less palatable and this can lead to loss of appetite, undesirable weight loss and further weakness.
- **Body weight** - it is important that your pet maintains a healthy body weight, too thin and he/she can become weak. Too fat and that puts additional pressure on your pet's heart. To aid you in achieving weight loss, if necessary, the nurses run free weight clinics – please ask at reception.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids and Vitamin D** – We already know that Omega-3 Fatty acids are of benefit to pet's hearts but from human studies it is likely Vitamin D also may play a role. As we know dogs, in particular, often are low in vitamin D we would strongly advise a daily supplement with **cod-liver oil** which will provide both these products. Note that in our pets, unlike humans, they source all their vitamin D from the diet not from exposure to the sun.
- **Taurine and L-carnitine** – these are amino acids (types of proteins) which have been found to be of benefit to some dogs and cats with heart disease (Gompf 2005). These amino acids are found in some modern heart disease diets (as produced by Hills and Royal Canin) or can be added to existing diets.

So in summary we suggest the addition of nutritional supplements to your pet's diet.

	Cats	Dogs < 25kg	Dogs 25-40kg
Taurine	250mg PO q 12hrs	Same dose as cats	Same dose as cats
L-carnitine	No evidence	1000mg PO q 8hrs	2000mg PO q 8hrs

#### Exercise

The heart is a muscle and so continued controlled exercise is definitely recommended. But not excessive or at a level that your pet is not used to.

#### Monitoring at home:

It is very very important to monitor your pet's breathing at home. An increase in the number of breaths taken while at rest can be an important clue that the level of medication needs to be reviewed. To count the breaths – wait you're your



pet is relaxed and lying down. Then gently rest your hand on his/her chest and count the number of breaths taken in a minute – it is very important to count for a minute – no longer and no shorter. Then record this somewhere so you can if there are any changes from day to day.

**Drug therapy:**

There have been huge advances in the drug treatment of heart disease in veterinary medicine. One of the most useful drugs is Pimobendan (Marketed as Vetmedin). The drugs best suited for your pet will be discussed by the vet.

**Regular check-ups:**

Clearly it is vital we see your pet for regular check-ups to assess how his/her heart is doing and also to review the breathing rate you have been monitoring at home.

**Further information**

There is a useful website maintained by the makers of Vetmedin which may be of interest - <http://www.vetmedin.co.uk>

With kind regards  
Everyone at Gatehouse Vets

Gompf, R., 2005. Nutritional and herbal therapies in the treatment of heart disease in cats and dogs. *Journal of the American Animal Hospital*.