

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Dear Dr. Schmidt, My dog Colorado has a heart murmur. What does that mean?

Thanks, Cassi

Dear Cassi, Normally when we listen to your pet's heart, that "lub-dub" sound we hear are your pet's heart valves closing. They normally make a nice crisp sound. As the blood is pushed out of the chambers of the heart, these valves close and prevent any of that blood from flowing backward, and in the wrong direction. If the valves have a defect in them, it can cause them to close incompletely, thus leaving a gap for some of the blood to flow backward in the wrong direction. Now the blood that is flowing backward has resistance from the blood flowing forward, and this causes turbulence. This turbulence thus creates a swishing type sound. Now instead of hearing a "lub-dub" sound, we hear a "lub-swish" sound. This swishing sound is what we call a murmur. We grade the severity of the defect on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being the least severe, and a 6 the most severe. Yes, Colorado does have a defective heart valve, but it doesn't automatically mean it is going to keep getting worse, or that he is going to die from heart disease. The majority of dogs that have murmurs live many more healthy years. Of course some of them can continue to get worse, and can lead to more severe heart disease, or make another heart condition worse. So it is very important to make sure your veterinarian closely monitors his heart murmur every time he makes a visit. If signs of heart disease do begin to develop, there are medications that can help alleviate some of the consequences, and the sooner those signs are recognized, the better (I can explain them in another article). So Cassi, now you know to remind your veterinarian to evaluate Colorado's murmur each visit.

Have a great day,

Submitted by: Dr. Doug



Dr. Douglas Schmidt

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