

## **Echocardiogram Info**

### Referring Veterinarian Handout

An echocardiogram is a procedure that involves an ultrasound of the heart. This procedure allows investigation of the structure and function of cardiac chambers, valves and external structures (ie. pericardial sac) in real time. It also allows use of colour and spectral doppler examination of blood flow through the heart and where it enters and exits.

### **When to do an echocardiogram**

- Murmur, gallop or systolic click during auscultation of the heart
- Muffled heart or lung sounds
- Tachypnea or increased resting respirations
- Exercise intolerance
- Syncope
- Arrhythmias
- Pulmonary crackles on lung auscultation
- New or chronic coughing
- Jugular vein distension or strong bounding femoral pulses
- Weak and thready femoral pulses
- Sudden paralysis or paresis
- Stable hemoabdomen, pleural or pericardial effusion or presence of ascites
- Concern for an enlarged or abnormal cardiac silhouette on radiographs
- Elderly dogs or cats undergoing procedures that may exacerbate congestive heart failure (general anesthesia, fluid therapy or extended release glucocorticosteroids)
- Pre-breeding screening breeds predisposed for cardiac disease:
  - Dogs: Boxers, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Doberman Pinscher, Great Dane, etc.
  - Cats: Sphynx, Siamese, Maine Coon, Persian, etc.

### **How to organize an echocardiogram**

Please visit the Fairfield webpage diagnostics webpage (<https://www.fairfieldanimalhospital.ca/services#diagnostic-services>) and select echocardiogram under ultrasound services. Fill out the form and email or fax to our office. When received one of our technicians will call the owner and book a time that fits within our schedule and the pet owners. Please advise your clients this could take up to a week to receive a call from our team to book.

### **What to expect**

Patients will be dropped off the day of the appointment and will be triaged based on other patient scans that day. An echocardiogram lasts approximately 60-90 mins depending on the patient's behaviour and abnormalities found on image acquisition. However, a patient may not get their scan done until hours after drop off.

To acquire the most accurate ultrasound images, patients will have their fur shaved on both sides of the chest and may require sedation. To avoid injectable sedation (or reduce the amount) during the appointment, oral sedation at home is recommended. Please see the referral sheet for suggested oral sedation prior to the appointment. Because injectable sedation

may be required during the appointment it is recommended that the patient be fasted from food and water 12 hours prior to the day of their ultrasound.

Patients will be discharged as soon as their scan is completed and based on other patient discharges. A summarized report will be provided to you, the referring Vet, and an official report will be emailed to your office after cardiologist review of the submitted images and doppler values. This may take 1-3 days after the patient's scan is completed. No prescriptions or medication adjustments will be made on the day of the patient's appointment.

*Please note that patients should be cardiovascularly stable on appointment day.* If there are any concerns about an unstable cardiac patient please contact Fairfield Animal Hospital (250-860-6550) to discuss with one of our veterinary team members about urgent / emergent referral and stabilization prior to an echocardiogram.