

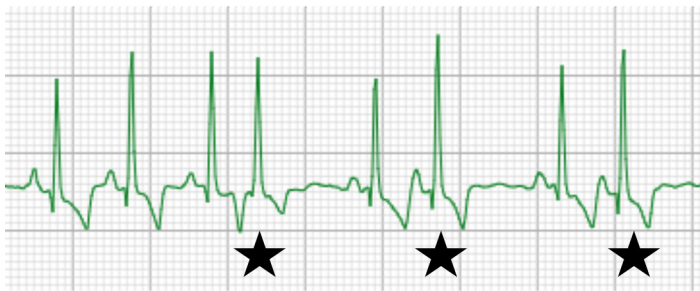
Atrial Premature Contractions

What are atrial premature contractions?

- Atrial premature contractions (APCs) are early beats arising from the top chambers of the heart (the atria) that are not from the natural pacemaker of the heart.
- APCs are usually due to stress, stretch, or scarring of the atrial muscle.
- Atrial premature contractions can occur in runs (multiple premature beats in a row), called atrial tachycardia.

How are APCs diagnosed?

- Veterinarians can be suspicious of premature beats by listening to the heart rhythm with a stethoscope, but a definitive diagnosis is with an electrocardiogram (ECG).



This ECG strip shows a normal heart rhythm with atrial premature contractions (denoted with stars).

When do we treat?

- The cardiologist will assess your pet's risk for symptoms from the arrhythmia to determine a treatment and monitoring plan.

Follow up plan:

- It is important to have follow up ECGs (+/- ambulatory 24 hour ECG termed a Holter monitor) to assess if the arrhythmia is progressing, if the management plan is working, and to help make adjustments.