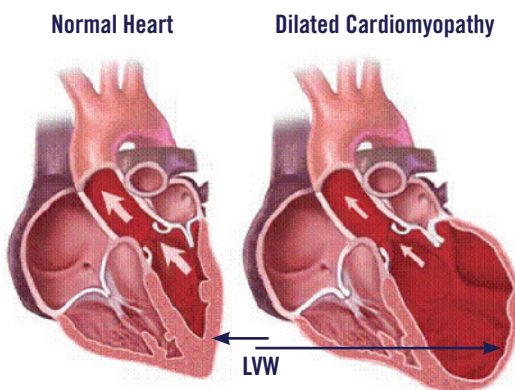


# Dilated Cardiomyopathy in Dogs

## What is Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) ?

- Heart muscle disease that causes loss of heart muscle strength, enlargement of the heart, and a decreased ability to pump blood through the body (heart failure).
- Affects any age dog, but occurrence increases with age.
- Heart failure can be compared to a common pump. If the sump pump in your basement fails, water backs up into the basement; if the left heart fails, fluid backs up into the lungs; if the right heart fails, fluid backs up in the belly.
- Irregular heartbeat (arrhythmias/abnormal electrical activity) can be a life threatening complication of this disease.



Notice the change from the normal heart on the left to the dilated, thin walled heart on the right (DCM).

## What causes DCM?

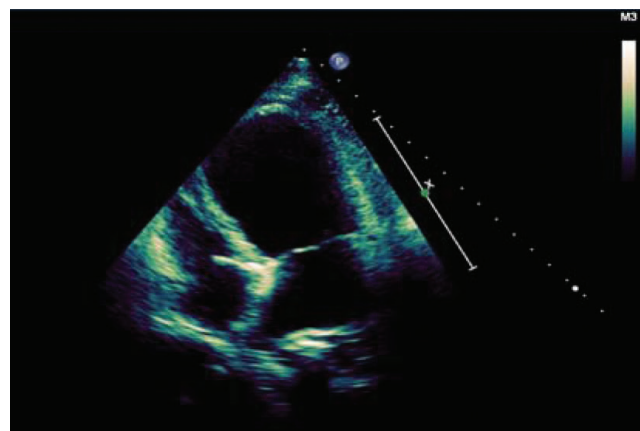
- DCM occurs in families of dogs. The exact genes and/or modes of inheritance have not been fully defined and research on this continues.
- Doberman Pinscher and Great Dane dogs are often affected.

## How is DCM Diagnosed?

- Through a cardiac evaluation and echocardiogram (sonogram of the heart) performed by a board certified veterinary cardiologist such as those at CVCA.
- Holter monitors are often required to check the heart rhythm over 24 hours. These devices are worn by the patient in a small backpack and usually are well tolerated.

## How is it treated?

- The specific treatment is tailored to the individual patient.
- Oral medications are most commonly used and many are the same as those used for people with heart disease.
- Therapy improves the heart's ability to pump and controls the signs of congestive heart failure.
- Treatment extends the life of the patient while allowing the pet excellent quality of life.
- Some patients also need medications to improve their heart rhythm. These medications are crucial to minimize the risk of arrhythmias and sudden death.



Echocardiographic image of a heart affected by DCM. The view is upside down compare to figure 1. The heart muscle is thin and both of the chambers of the left heart are dilated.