Happy American Heart Month!

We are grateful for the opportunity to use this time to recognize and thank all of the veterinary professionals who support cardiovascular health in pets by spreading awareness and working with us, we so appreciate you!

Our team is honoring this month with social media quizzes, photo contests, a donation to the American Heart Association, and a wear red contest. We are so grateful to work with such a wonderful group of dedicated professionals. Wishing all of you a wonderful month!
Meet our 3 Board-Certified Cardiologists!

❤ Weekly Quizzes - Kick-off Monday, February 3rd
❤ Frame for Fame, CVCA Giving Back
❤ Show us your Heart Contest
❤ National Wear Red Day, Friday, February 7th

To learn more, visit www.cvcavets.com/americanheartmonth
The Case of Parsifal the Cat

By Bonnie Lefbom, DVM, Diplomate, ACVIM (Cardiology)

Parsifal is an 11-year-old male, neutered Siamese cat living the classic, happily spoiled life of an indoor cat. He presented to his primary care veterinarian last week because the owners had noticed he was over-grooming and also becoming more aloof – extremely unusual for this gregarious, interactive cat!

On presentation, the veterinarian noticed tachypnea (and a few live fleas). She ran a snap BNP that was abnormal, took thoracic radiographs that revealed pulmonary edema, gave a lasix injection and sent them all to the ER so CVCA could consult on him that same day.

Physical examination revealed no murmur, no gallop, a mild tachycardia at 200 bpm, mild tachypnea at 40 breaths per minute, fine crackles in all lung fields and no other issues. Echo evaluation revealed the classic late stage cardiomyopathy we see in middle aged and older cats – regions of concentric LV hypertrophy with regions of fibrosis, poor contractility, large atria, restrictive inflow patterns and congestive failure with low volume pleural and pericardial effusion. We recommended treatment and the owners are struggling with how to medicate a cat. Typical scenario for all.
So, what happened to Parsifal? How did he devolve into congestive heart failure and no one knew? Cats!!

Silent cardiomyopathy in cats is the absolute worst for everyone involved. Owners feel guilty because they feel they should have known earlier, primary care veterinarians feel bad because they think they should have picked up on something, and cardiologists hate it because our first interaction with the client is when they and their cat are in distress.

There is no single solution to this problem but routine use of NT proBNP has definitely improved our chances of rooting out these frustrating cases. If we can convince cat owners not only to seek routine veterinary care but also to run screening NT proBNP levels on their feline companions, everyone would benefit. The economics of screening every cat is debatable for a disease that hits 15% of the general cat population. However, as veterinarians, we can provide the statistics and recommendations and then it's up to the owner to decide. Clients who definitely should pursue routine NT ProBNP levels are those with predisposed breeds such as Maine Coon, Ragdoll, British Shorthair, Sphynx, Chartreux and Persian cats as well as those with known littermates or families of affected cats.

Is the Snap BNP good enough?

Sometimes. As a cage side test for cats with respiratory signs, the efficacy of the Snap test to determine presence or absence of congestive heart failure is excellent. As an adjunctive test when we are trying to differentiate respiratory disease from congestive heart failure and no echo is available, it’s a great confidence builder. As a screening tool, the SNAP test will be abnormal in cats with moderate to severe disease. Only the serum NT ProBNP level will pick up more mildly affected cats. Snap BNP results can also be confusing in older cats because an abnormal result could be secondary to thyroid disease, hypertension and kidney dysfunction.

So what do we recommend?

Have the conversation. As a part of every feline wellness visit, bring up the data and let cat owners know you care about their cats’ cardiac condition. Let’s keep working together to avoid the fate of Parsifal.

References for "The Case of Parsifal the Cat"


Multicenter Evaluation of Plasma NT Pro BNP as a biochemical screening test for asymptomatic (occult) cardiomyopathy in cats. Fox PR, Rus JE, Reynolds CA, et al. (including Lefbom) JVIM 211;25:101-1016

Assessment of the diagnostic accuracy of circulating natriuretic peptide concentrations to distinguish between cats with cardiac and non-cardiac causes of respiratory distress. Connolly D, Magalhaes RJ, et al. JVIM 2009;11:s41eS50