Cats Protection frequently faces the dilemma of when to fund the costs of diagnostic workups for cats in its care in which heart murmurs have been detected. Certainly, heart murmurs are common in cats and costs of screening can markedly increase the costs associated with rehoming work. A recent study (Wagner and Fuentes et al, 2010) indicated a high prevalence of around 33% of cats in CP care having heart murmurs, only around 50% of those cats had any evidence of structural heart disease (the majority being mild), while around 25% of those cats without murmurs did have ultrasonographic findings of structural heart disease.

Heart murmur heard on veterinary examination of an asymptomatic patient

Heart murmur to be staged 1-6 by the veterinary surgeon

Heart murmurs Grade 1-4 in asymptomatic cats with no other cardiac abnormalities, ie no arrhythmias/gallop rhythms

No further cardiac work up, note in clinical records and declare at time of homing. Advice that the cause of the murmur and its prognosis is unknown. Continue to monitor on each veterinary examination.

Heart murmurs Grade 5-6 in asymptomatic cats

Further diagnostic work up to be funded and carried out, including a cardiac ultrasound where indicated.

+=/OR Arrhythmia and/or gallop rhythm heard in asymptomatic patient

+=/OR Patient showing clinical signs of heart disease who is likely to have a good prognosis

Where funds allow