



Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) SC037711 (Scotland)

Investigation of heart murmurs in cats in CP care

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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 the 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 per cent of cats in CP care having heart murmurs, only around 50 per cent of those cats had any evidence of structural heart disease (the majority being mild), while around 25 per cent of those cats without murmurs did have ultrasonographic findings of structural heart disease.

In general, CP currently recommends that CP branches and adoption centres consider funding further cardiac work up for cats in CP care with clinical signs of heart disease and where funds allow, those asymptomatic cats and kittens:-

- With an arrhythmia and/or
- With a gallop rhythm and/or
- Which are asymptomatic but have a persistent heart murmur of grade 5/6 or 6/6

It is generally recommended not to fund further cardiac work up for a cat in CP care which has a heart murmur of grade 1/6 to 4/6 if the cat is asymptomatic and has no arrhythmia or gallop rhythm. However, potential owners would be made fully aware when adopting such cats that a heart murmur had been detected, that the cause of the murmur was unknown and the prognosis for the cat was unknown. After adoption it would then be up to the owner to decide whether to undertake further investigations in consultation with their own vet. Of course, a case-by-case approach will still be needed and there may be situations where deviation from the above guidelines would be appropriate.

Are there any discounts in place for a cat that needs a heart scan?

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is currently offering reduced cost referral of cats in the care of Cats Protection (CP) which require echocardiography, as a result of collaboration on a feline heart research project. Visit the website <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/CatScan/Index.cfm> for further details.

Therefore, if echocardiography is recommended (in line with the above guidance), branches and adoption centres within a reasonable distance of the RVC's Queen Mother Hospital, near Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, are encouraged to contact the CP veterinary department for further details.

Please phone 01825 741 991 or email veterinary@cats.org.uk to find out more.

Branches and ACs that are not within a reasonable distance to the RVC are asked to contact the CP Veterinary Department (details above) which keeps a list of vets offering reduced cost cardiac work-up in other areas of the UK.