



November/December 2009



## ❄️ Happy Holidays ❄️

Help find a cure for heart disease!

Heart disease in cats is often diagnosed very late due to the nature of the cat. The most common form is hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). This is a thickening of the muscles of the ventricles and a dilation of the left atrium resulting in a non-elastic heart that cannot pump blood efficiently. HCM is often familial in cats (like the similar disease in humans) inherited in a dominant gene.



A genetic test is available for Maine Coons but not for other breeds. Cats are usually middle age or older but can be diagnosed at any age. No viral or nutritional cause has been identified. HCM is diagnosed by cardiac ultrasound and by ruling out hypertension or hyperthyroid disease as a cause of hypertrophy. Unfortunately by the time a cat shows symptoms (rapid respiration, or nonspecific signs such as vomiting, lethargy, wt. loss, or weakness) there is often advanced disease. Diagnosis is difficult by physical exam and auscultation of the heart alone.

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### Ask Johnny! Why am I so Fat?

Good question Tubbs. You are consuming too many calories, usually in the form of dry food carbs. You need to have more protein in the form of quality wet food and more playtime exercise. If you only like dry food there are low calorie choices (ask the docs.) Diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, poor grooming ugh. Time for that New Year resolution!



## *Cats like gifts too!*

Come see our selection of Helga's hand made mice, fluffy beds and thermal mats, catnip pillows, scratching pads, fly fish toys, treats to eat, gourmet and prescription food. Or identify your cat with a colorful collar (**better yet get a microchip**). Give a gift for others....cards and soft cats for

### *The Topsy Turvey Fund !*



We still have kittens for adoption. Please come see us at the clinic and give us a forever home for the Holidays. A gift of life.

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Murmurs, rapid heart rate, and arrhythmias warrant further work up but do not always correlate with HCM. A devastating complication of this disease is aortic thromboembolism: a blood clot formed in the left atrium that occludes the distal aorta resulting in paralysis, severe pain and often death.

Currently there is little good news about HCM and treatment. Reducing pulmonary edema does help and diuretics are prescribed. There is no proof that drugs to reduce the heart rate or relax the muscle of the heart actually benefit the HCM patient. We do prescribe standard heart medications but recommend you see a Veterinary Cardiologist for cutting edge treatment.

One bit of good news is that heart disease can resolve if high blood pressure or hyperthyroidism is treated. A **Silver Whiskers Exam** includes blood tests, urinalysis, blood pressure and radiographs. Call the clinic for details.

One other bright spot in the history of feline cardiac disease is the discovery that **taurine** added to feline diets (an amino acid that cats cannot make) prevents **Dilated Cardiomyopathy**. In this disease the heart enlarges, becomes thin walled and pumps very weakly resulting in congestive heart failure. In 1988 veterinary researchers discovered this link and saved many cat lives. All commercial cat foods now add taurine to their products.

Research in feline heart disease is ongoing at many Veterinary Schools and private foundations. *The possibility of a cure or better treatments is the hope of the future for cats that develop HCM.*

**Where can I donate for Feline Research?**

<http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/>

<http://www.morrisanimalfoundation.org/special-campaigns/hhcc/>

<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/FHC/>

**We can make a difference for our best friend!**

**Thanks for caring!**

## Photo of the Month Contest

**Win a bag of Royal Canin Cat food, a soft bed or cat nip toy by sending a digital photo to: [felinedocs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:felinedocs@sbcglobal.net)**

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