



# EAST COAST VETERINARY CARDIOLOGY

## Holter Monitor Information for Owners

### **What is a Holter Monitor?**

A Holter monitor is an ambulatory electrocardiogram (ECG) which is commonly used in animals to detect intermittent arrhythmias (irregular heart rhythm) that may be resulting in clinical signs such as fainting, episodic weakness or exercise intolerance. It is also used to detect the presence of occult (asymptomatic) heart disease in certain breeds (Dobermans, Boxers) and to assess efficacy of anti-arrhythmic treatments for arrhythmias.

### **Is it uncomfortable?**

Animals generally tolerate wearing a Holter very well – especially if they have previously worn a jacket or other clothing. Some animals will find the jacket and wrapping somewhat restrictive and their routine may be altered. Some dogs will be less interested in walking, playing and even eating until the Holter is removed. It is rare that a Holter requires removal prior to the completed recording window.

### **When are results available?**

Results are typically available within 5 business days of removing the Holter and receiving the unit back. Once we have reviewed the results, we will contact both you and your family veterinarian with the findings and recommendations. A full copy of the results will be forwarded to your family veterinarian.

### **What should my pet do while wearing the Holter?**

Unless directed to do so, please allow your pet to have a normal daily routine. You will be provided with a Holter diary to complete any activities that may excite them such as playing, eating or when someone rang the doorbell. Should an event occur while wearing the Holter (such as a collapse episode) you may push the “EVENT” button the Holter and/or make a note with the corresponding time on your activity sheet. If it is raining or snowing, do not allow the Holter to become wet. The jacket will partially protect the unit, but some owners will cover the unit with a plastic bag or saran wrap to provide an extra barrier from moisture.



When you return with your pet to have the Holter removed, please be sure to bring along the Holter diary with you so it can be sent with the Holter unit. The Holter should be removed after 24 hours – it is set to record for this time period and then will turn off when completed so don't be alarmed if the screen is blank.

### **What should my pet NOT do while wearing the Holter?**

Do **not** allow your pet to play around water or swim. The recorder cannot become wet. Do **not** cut any of the bandage material off your pet as the Holter recorder's wires may also be cut. The removal of the bandage by you would only be necessary in an emergency. In the event of an emergency, the bandage material can be unwrapped (layer by layer) to expose the wires. The wires can then be disconnected from the skin electrodes. It is ideal that the bandage material, coat and Holter unit are removed by your contact person with your family veterinarian to reduce risk for damage to the unit.

Do **not** leave your pet unattended if you are concerned about them eating the coat and/or bandage material. Typically, when the Holter is damaged it is *not* by the pet wearing the Holter but another pet in the household. Therefore, if you have other pets at home and are concerned that they may damage the Holter, it may be best to separate them if left unattended. You are financially responsible for any damages incurred while the Holter is in your possession. The approximate replacement cost of a Holter is \$1900 and the cost to replace the Holter wires is \$135. If the jacket is damaged beyond repair, the cost of replacement of the Holter jacket is \$110. Some home owner insurance policies may cover Holter monitors – you may wish to contact your insurance company to see if it is covered under your policy.

If you have a dog door, realize that with the Holter unit on your pet may be taller and unable to fit comfortably through the door or other small spaces.

### **What should I do if I see a wire sticking out from the jacket?**

If a wire is noted, try to tuck the wire back underneath the bandaging material and Holter jacket – that way it is less likely to be chewed or become snagged on something.

### **Should I press any buttons on the actual Holter unit?**

Once the Holter is set to record, you do not have to press any buttons – however, if an episode should occur you may press the 'Event' button. This will then tag that time on the Holter during the analysis as a period of interest for us to review. If you miss pressing the button that is fine – just be sure to record the event and time on your Holter diary.

### **Should we remove the electrodes after the Holter is completed?**

If the electrodes are still in place, it is often best to leave them on for a day or two for the adhesive to break down. Trying to forcibly remove the electrodes can remove skin. They can be gently removed using some baby oil as well if needed. We have had dogs chew the electrodes off – fortunately if they are swallowed, they generally do not cause any issues. However, if your dog should swallow the electrodes, monitor for any vomiting, lethargy or poor appetite and contact a veterinarian if noted.

### **Who should I contact if I have any issues with the Holter?**

Please contact your family veterinarian or your veterinary cardiologist if you have any questions or concerns while your pet is wearing the Holter monitor.

