EAST COAST VETERINARY CARDIOLOGY

Resting Respiratory Rate Monitoring

For animals with left sided congestive heart failure (CHF), at home resting respiratory rate monitoring has been proven to be a useful monitoring tool to ensure good management of CHF. Studies have shown that dogs with controlled CHF will typically have resting respiratory rates under 30 breaths per minute. A study in cats suggested that a consistent resting respiratory rate higher than 30 breaths per minute should prompt evaluation for presence of CHF. This at home monitoring is often combined with information obtained from in-hospital evaluations (including physical examination and thoracic radiograph findings) to determine if a change to CHF therapy is indicated.

As counting the respiratory rate is easy to do, it has become part of the daily management in animals being treated for CHF. Below are instructions on how to easily monitor your animals resting respiratory rate.

> While your pet is sleeping and without touching or disturbing them, count the number of breaths taken in 1 minute. Do not measure when your animal is excited or being active! You can usually determine this by watching the chest move in and out. When the chest moves up and then back down counts as one breath. Keep track of this number by jotting it in a calendar or logbook. Most animals without congestion (fluid) in the lungs have a resting respiratory rate less than 30 breaths per minute; some are <20/min. Once your pet's baseline resting respiratory rate is determined, continue monitoring the resting rate periodically (once daily).

There are videos available on Youtube that help demonstrate the correct method to count your animals' respiratory rate (search resting respiratory rate dog). There are also free apps that can be downloaded to your phone (Cardalis) that can allow graphing of the respiratory rate over time and this information can even be emailed to your veterinarian for review. If your animals resting respiratory rate is persistently increased by more than 1/3 above baseline, this may be an early indicator of CHF and you should contact your family veterinarian for further recommendations.