

Dilated Cardiomyopathy

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center
7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714
(847)-647-9325 FAX (847)-647-8498
www.nilesanimalhospital.com

Overview

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is a disease characterized by dilation or enlargement of the heart chambers and markedly reduced contraction. The left ventricle is almost always involved. Advanced cases demonstrate dilation of all cardiac chambers.

DCM is very common in dogs, representing one of the most common reasons for congestive heart failure (CHF). This heart disease also can cause heart valve leakage resulting in heart murmurs or abnormal electrical activity of the heart—producing arrhythmias (irregular or abnormal heartbeats). Large and giant breed dogs, especially males, are predisposed. Doberman pinschers, Irish wolfhounds, Great Danes and Saint Bernards are typical examples. Spaniel breeds also develop DCM.

The clinical condition of canine DCM can range from overtly healthy (occult disease) to severe heart failure. Some dogs experience primary electrical disturbances (arrhythmia) such as atrial fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia which can lead to sudden death.

DCM is very serious and the mortality rate, even of treated cases, is very high.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Dilated cardiomyopathy is generally diagnosed by a thorough history, physical examination, chest x-rays, electrocardiogram (EKG) and echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart).
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Pets with dilated cardiomyopathy are treated with diuretics (furosemide and/or spironolactone), angiotension converting enzyme inhibitors (enalapril or benazapril), carvedilol or metoprolol, pimobendan, and/or digoxin. Other medications and a sodium-restricted diet may be beneficial. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Coughing
- Breathing problems or shortness of breath
- Collapse
- Poor appetite
- Lethargy
- Weakness
- Exercise intolerance

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*