

WHAT IS CHRONIC VALVULAR DISEASE?

Chronic valvular disease (CVD), also called degenerative valve disease or myxomatous valve disease, refers to a noninfectious degeneration of the heart valves. In dogs and cats, the most commonly affected valve is the mitral valve on the left side of the heart, followed by the tricuspid valve on the right side.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS OF CVD?

Most commonly occurring in older, small breed dogs, these valves degenerate over time and impede their ability to form a tight seal between the atrium and ventricle chambers of the heart. Thus, they begin to leak as the heart beats, resulting in an audible heart murmur. As the valve degeneration worsens, the heart chambers can enlarge and heart failure can occur. Fortunately, only about 20% of patients with CVD will succumb to their heart disease.

HOW IS CVD TREATED?

Treatment of CVD centers on improving heart function and eliminating signs of congestive heart failure. Medications may not be needed initially but may be added as CVD progresses. Monitoring of heart function is typically done every 6 months initially and may increase in frequency as heart function declines.