**Heart Murmurs - Information for owners.**

**This handout is for those considering adopting, or have adopted, cats that have been diagnosed with a heart murmur.**

A heart murmur means that in addition to normal ‘lub-dub' heart sounds, the vet can also hear extra sounds when listening to the heart with a stethoscope.

They are usually graded from 1 to 6 with 1 being very quiet and 6 being loud, but the grade can also change on a daily basis.

The grade of murmur heard may not necessarily correlate with the severity of any heart disease if present. For example, some cats may have a grade 4 out of 6 heart murmurs, but no heart disease at all.

Heart murmurs are very common in cats. A study showed that around one third of cats have a heart murmur. Although a murmur may signify a problem with the heart, around one half of healthy cats with a heart murmur don't have any underlying heart disease and of those that do, many live quite normally without ever developing any signs of that disease.

Conversely, cats who do have significant heart disease may not have a heart murmur at all, meaning that many cases of heart disease remain undetected.

Heart murmurs in cats can come and go or they can be exasperated by some illnesses or infections. Some kittens that have heart murmurs detected can also grow out of them.

**The majority of cats diagnosed with a heart murmur will either have an innocent murmur, or only mild structural heart disease, in which case the outlook is generally good.**

For those with no signs of heart disease there is currently little evidence to indicate that treatment will delay development of heart failure or extend a cat’s life expectancy. A small number of cats will be found to have significant heart disease.

Animal rescue’s frequently face the dilemma of when to fund the costs of diagnostic tests for cats in its care, where heart murmurs have been detected. Heart murmurs are common in cats and the costs of further investigations and tests markedly increase the costs associated with rehoming work and reduce the financial help we can give to other animals urgently in need of it.

Because of this, we only investigate heart murmurs further, when they are grade 3 or above, or if other heart disease symptoms have been picked up.

We will then financially cover those needing on-going treatment, where needed, on our part-foster care scheme.

**Where a grade 1-2 murmur is found, an owner can choose to have this monitored or investigated at their own vets, should they wish to follow up on it.**

Any further questions, please do ask the animal care team, or contact us.

Having this condition may or may not affect your pet insurance. The rescue centre is not able to be responsible for what pet insurance companies will cover.