

## February is for (Dog and Cat) Lovers

Your clients undoubtedly invested a great deal of time, thought and money in sharing their hearts on Valentine's Day earlier last month. What better time to remind them about the importance of heart health to their other loved ones, their dogs and cats?

Even owners who are careful about vaccination, diet and other health factors may not fully understand the threats to heart health and how to prevent them. Be sure to point out that about 10 percent of all dogs have heart disease, and that figure can rise to 60 percent or greater in aging dogs. As many as one in six cats may have heart disease, sometimes without developing clinical signs. Although these statistics probably are well-known to veterinarians, they may come as a surprise to your clients. Be sure to use regular

checkups and other visits to educate them about the importance of cardiac health and the important role veterinarians play in keeping their cats and dogs healthy. You can also direct them to excellent resources for additional information at [www.yourdogsheart.com](http://www.yourdogsheart.com) and [www.yourcatsheart.com](http://www.yourcatsheart.com). ■

### CEG Members:

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## Spreading the News at WVC

Two of our members had the opportunity to share important diagnosis and treatment information on companion animal heart health during a special symposium at the recent Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas. Rebecca Stepien, DVM, discussed "A New Murmur in an Old Dog: Now What?" and "No Echo: Now What?". Whit Church, DVM, spoke on the topics of "Canine Treatment Dilemmas" and "Insight into the Feline Heart". Both sessions had record attendance with more than 600 veterinary professionals in total. "The CEG Symposium was a great success," said Dr. Rebecca Stepien. "We received many positive responses to the information we presented, and many of the attendees met with us after the presentation for further discussion on the topics." For more information on the CEG's recommendations for the treatment and diagnosis of canine and feline heart disease, visit us at [www.cardiaceducationgroup.org](http://www.cardiaceducationgroup.org). ■



## Website Adds Three New Case Studies

Traffic has been strong at the CEG website ([www.cardiaceducationgroup.org](http://www.cardiaceducationgroup.org)). We encourage you to bookmark it and check back regularly as we continually add more useful information, much of it interactive. Be sure to check out three new case studies, all of which are certified by the Registry of Approved Continuing Education (RACE):

- **Hershey** is a 14-year-old Cockapoo whose cough returned after being treated for same condition six months earlier.
- **Athena**, a 6-year-old Doberman, showed decreased appetite, coughing and labored breathing.
- **Jake**, also a Doberman, is 7. His owner took him to the veterinarian for an annual health evaluation.



While you are on the website, try out our updated radiograph viewer, where users can search by breed and disease. Be watching for further updates this spring, including a state-of-the-art Vertebral Heart Scale tool and enhanced user interface. ■

## Cardiac Corner

- Remind clients that regular checkups are only part of the overall formula for good heart health that also include proper diet and regular exercise for their cat or dog.
- Ninety-five percent of all heart conditions in dogs are acquired, not genetic. The two principal types of acquired diseases are valvular disease and dilated cardiomyopathy.
- Encourage your colleagues and clients to visit [www.vetmedin.com/millionheartchallenge](http://www.vetmedin.com/millionheartchallenge) and click on the Show Heart button. Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc. will donate \$15,000 to the American College of Internal Veterinary Medicine to support canine cardiology research after one million guests visit the site.
- Heart disease affects all types of cats, including domestic, shorthair and longhair varieties. However, these purebreds are especially vulnerable: American shorthair, Maine coon, Persian, Siamese, Sphinx and Ragdoll.
- It's almost spring, which is the perfect time for pets and their owners to get outside and exercise. Being overweight makes the heart work harder. Many cities now hold annual runs for dogs and their owners, which can provide good motivation for regular exercise.

## Common Misconceptions About Congestive Heart Failure Series

### Myth #2

**It's best to wait to discuss heart disease and heart failure until clinical signs of heart failure are present.**

Just as in humans, early detection of heart disease or heart failure in dogs and cats is vital. Let the owners know when you first notice a murmur, but also be sure to educate them about what it means. This is a good time to explain the difference between heart disease (an abnormality in cardiac structure or function) and heart failure (heart disease causing outward clinical signs). This difference is important, because many medications will not be recommended until heart failure is present. Tell them that as a veterinarian and the animal's caregiver, we work as a team to detect changes as they happen and intervene when necessary. Don't wait to talk to your clients about the early signs of heart disease. This valuable information is key to helping dogs live happier and healthier lives. ■



## Coming to a City Near You

Perhaps the No. 1 threat to the cardiac health of cats and dogs is simply a lack of awareness by their owners. The Mobile Heart Health Tours have educated thousands of owners and helped detect potential problems by providing more than 10,000 free screenings for dogs. Canine cardiologists help educate owners about the risks of Congestive Heart Failure and signs that owners should be aware of to help recognize the early signs of CHF.

The next Heart Health tour hits the road on April 25-27. Look for us in Pittsburgh; Washington, D.C.; and the Poodle Club of America in Salisbury, Md.

Cardiologists from the tour will also perform free heart health screenings in Austin, TX on May 22 during the Doggie Du Dash event activities. Specific times and locations, as well as additional tour dates throughout the year, will be posted on [www.yourdogsheart.com](http://www.yourdogsheart.com). ■



Dr. Whit Church and Dr. Chris Paige perform heart health screenings for dog owners in Phoenix, Ariz.

