

Heart Murmur ACTION PLAN



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5 Simple Steps Every Owner Should Take After a Heart Murmur Diagnosis

Reassurance & First Steps

Hearing your dog has a murmur can be scary — but most dogs with murmurs can live long, happy lives with the right care.

Here's what to do next...

Step 2: Watch for Warning Signs

- Coughing
- Faster or labored breathing
- Decreased energy
- Collapsing episodes

Step 3: Know the Key Stages for Medication

Stage B1 → no enlargement, monitoring only.

Stage B2 → enlarged heart, preventative meds start here.

Stages C/D → signs of heart failure, treatment plan needed

Step 5: Build a Team with Your Vet

Keep a log of symptoms and respiratory rates.

Bring your chart to every appointment.

Ask about echocardiograms to determine the stage.

Step 1: Stay Calm, Gather Info

- Write down any symptoms you've noticed.
- Ask your vet: **'What grade of murmur does my dog have?'**
- Ask your vet: **'What stage is my dog? Do I need to get an echo?'** (ACVIM B1, B2, C, or D). Stage B1 and B2 need an echo to diagnose
- Get an echo especially if the stage is unclear, or needing to find out if B1 or B2
- Ask your vet: **'What about chest x-rays?'** X-rays are most helpful if coughing or breathing difficulties seen. Not very reliable to assess cardiac size and to differentiate B1 and B2..

Step 4: Monitoring at Home

Track Breathing (Sleeping Respiratory Rate)

Count your dog's breaths while sleeping.

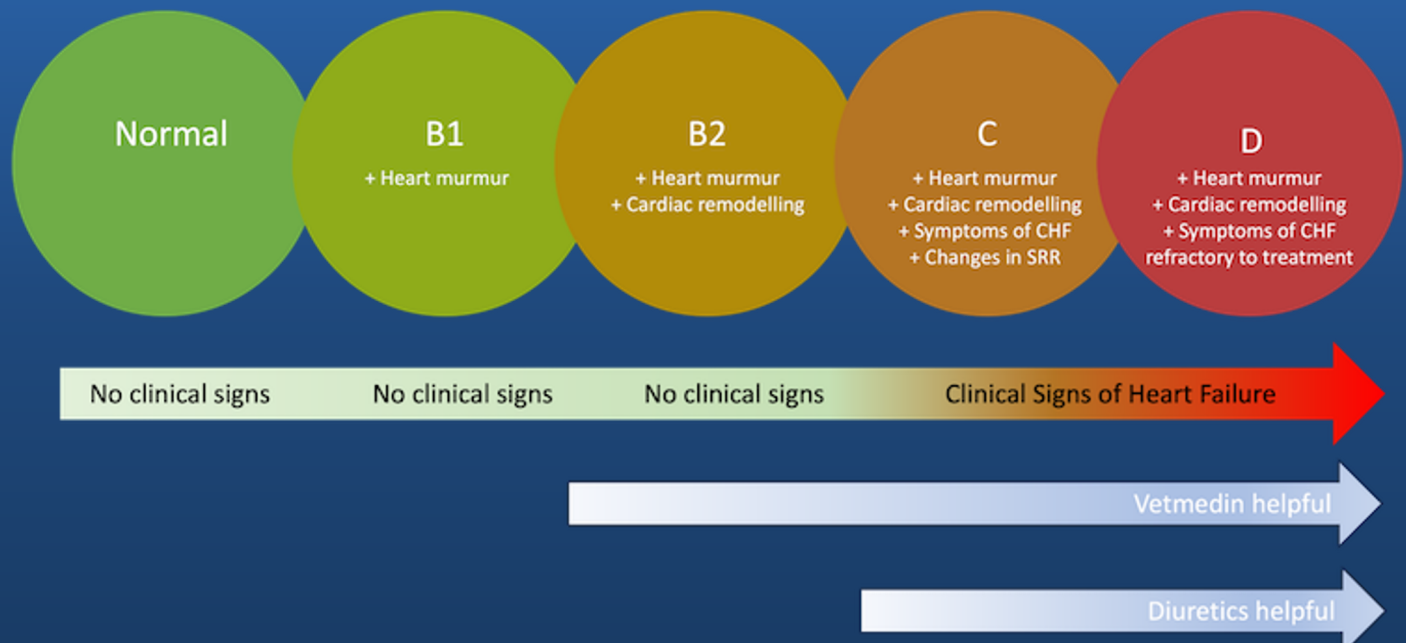
- Watch the chest rise and fall, count for 30 seconds, then multiply by 2.
- Normal = less than 30 breaths per minute.
- Log daily — use the chart provided

Or use the Cardalis App on a smartphone.

Also monitor appetite, exercise, energy and exercise

A fitness tracker can be very useful to quantify this

The ACVIM Stages Are A Roadmap To Use As The Condition Progresses



ACVIM Stage	Definition	Usual Treatment Strategy	Monitoring
Stage B1	Murmur, no heart enlargement	No treatment Omega 3 fatty acid	Monitor symptoms Recheck with vet Check with repeat echo's
Stage B2	Murmur + heart enlargement	Start preventative meds (e.g. pimobendan)	Start monitoring SRR and other symptoms
Stage C	Signs of heart failure	Pimobendan, frusemide, ACE inhibitors, spironolactone	SRR graphing Regular checks Echo's as needed
Stage D	Advanced heart failure	Specialist care, multiple meds,	Intensive monitoring

Use this guide to understand what monitoring and medications are typically recommended for each stage. Always confirm with your veterinarian.

✓ Breathing log

✓ Vet questions

✓ Stage awareness

You're not alone — with careful monitoring and the right treatment, many dogs with murmurs live comfortably for years.

📺 Watch the full [Dog Heart Health Essentials](#) playlist on YouTube for more in-depth videos.

🔗 Visit www.VetCardioHub.com for all resources

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