

INFORMATION SHEET for OWNERS



About your pet's referral to HeartVets

This information sheet has been designed to help you understand more about the procedure and includes a summary of what to expect and the answers to some commonly asked questions.

The afternoon before

We will admit your pet to the hospital the day before the procedure, this will give them a chance to settle in and for you to meet one of our cardiologists. During the consultation, our cardiologist will discuss the procedure, examine your pet and perform an ultrasound scan of the heart to double check everything and take the initial necessary measurements.

Your pet can have food and water as normal prior to being admitted on Tuesday afternoon. Please remember if they are on any medications or special diets, to bring them with you on the day

Morning of surgery

Your pet will be given a premedication, which has a mild sedative effect, this will allow the cardiologist to perform a final ultrasound scan of the heart to double check the measurements.

A general anaesthetic is then performed, and your pet will be prepared for surgery. This will include clipping the fur from the surgical site, the area will then be given a thorough clean to ensure they are ready for the sterile procedure. Your pet will then be taken into our fully equipped dedicated surgical theatre and the operation performed.

Once the surgery has been completed, you will be telephoned by the cardiologist to let you know how everything has gone. Your pet will be well looked after by our nursing team whilst he/she is recovering from their anaesthetic, and will be transferred to a warm padded bed to awaken. We will ensure adequate pain relief is given and once fully awake they will be offered a small amount of tummy friendly food.

Your pet will need to spend between 3-5 days with us at the hospital following pacemaker surgery, so we can closely monitor your pet following surgery. We will give you a daily update on your pet's progress and make an appointment for your pet to be discharged when ready.

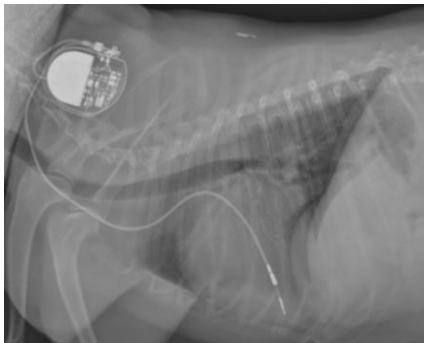
When you come to collect your pet, you will have a consultation with a member of the cardiology team to discuss the surgery performed and go through the discharge instructions. We will also provide you with a written summary, as we appreciate it can be a lot to take in, a copy of which will be sent to your own vet.

Ensuring your pet is ready for surgery

Your pet is about to undergo a sterile procedure, it is important that they are clean and don't have any skin infections (including fleas) that could potentially contaminate the surgical site or implants. If necessary, please give your pet a bath prior to your appointment.

Pacemakers

A pacemaker is an electronic device that maintains the heart rate and blood pressure by stimulating the heart to contract when the heart's own natural electrical activity fails to do so. In dogs, the pacemaker battery (or generator) is inserted under the skin at the side of the neck and from this, a wire (or pacing lead) conducts the electrical 'spark' to the heart. Pacemakers can be set to only provide a spark when the heart stops intermittently, or all the time. Modern pacemakers can also detect movement and so increase the heart rate, allowing the pet to exercise and go back to leading a normal life.



HeartVets are one of the few specialist centres in the UK to regularly perform pacemaker implantation. Thanks to our considerable experience we have a high success rate and the long-term outcome is usually good.

This X-ray image shows the pacemaker battery (generator) in the skin under a patient's neck with the metal lead running down into the heart.

Before recommending pacemaker implantation our cardiologist will need to look at the whole medical history provided by your vet, as well as the results of any tests such as the blood results, ECG and chest X-rays. They will also perform a thorough clinical examination and usually also do a cardiac ultrasound scan to check for any underlying heart problems which could affect the operation.

Once the pacemaker is in place, we keep patients in the hospital for 1-3 days, to make sure everything is healing well and the pacemaker doesn't come loose. After going home, we ask that they are kept on minimal exercise for around a month, to allow everything to heal. We need to check them about three months later to adjust the settings on the pacemaker (this is done wirelessly) and then periodically over the course of your pet's life.

After Surgery

Your pet will come home a few days after the operation with a large bandage around the neck. This bandage protects the operation sites from being scratched, helps to reduce any swelling, protects against infection and restricts head movement (minimising the risk of the pacemaker coming loose). Infection is a very serious complication, so please ensure your pet receives the antibiotics prescribe. Exercise should be restricted for about a 6 weeks, to allow complete healing. It is important to try to prevent your dog from activities such as jumping up or playing madly.

It is also important that you don't use a collar on your pet any more, as this could damage the pacemaker. If possible, use a harness (you may wish to buy one in advance to make sure it fits). The bandage can be checked and replaced for a lighter weight dressing that still restricts neck movement 5 days after discharge and that dressing can then be removed another 5-7 days later, if there are any stitches they will be removed at this time by your own veterinary surgeon. You will need to make these follow up appointments with them.

Long term management

Your dog will need to return to us to adjust the pacemaker settings (Programmer checks). At these visits we check the battery life and make sure the pacemaker settings are optimised to your pet. The first check is due 10 weeks after surgery: this is the most important check, being the first opportunity to optimise the settings. This initial check up is included in the surgery cost. After that a programming check is required annually. We will contact you with the date and time of the clinic two or three weeks in advance, but if you don't hear from us please contact us by email or phone.