

Mitral Valve Disease in Dogs

Mitral valve disease (MVD) is a common heart condition in dogs, particularly in older small to medium-sized breeds. It involves the degeneration of the mitral valve, one of the four heart valves, which is located between the left atrium and the left ventricle. Here's an overview of MVD in dogs:

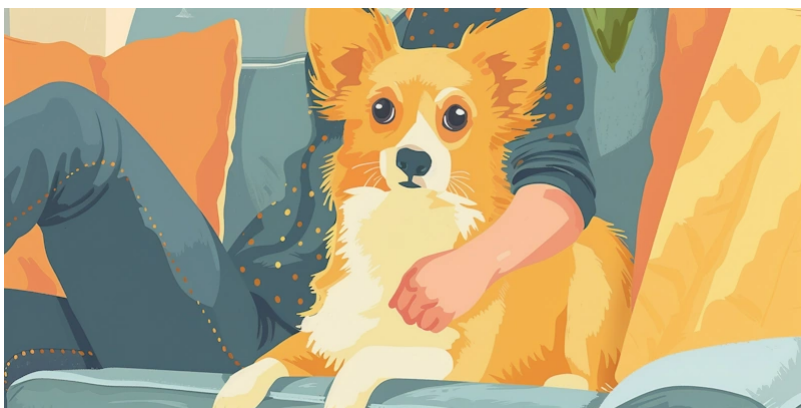
What is Mitral Valve Disease?

Mitral valve disease, also known as degenerative mitral valve disease (DMVD) or mitral regurgitation, occurs when the mitral valve becomes thickened and deformed. This deformation prevents the valve from closing properly, allowing blood to flow backward (regurgitate) into the left atrium when the left ventricle contracts.

Causes

The exact cause of MVD is not fully understood, but it is believed to be related to genetic factors and age. It is most commonly seen in older dogs and certain breeds, such as Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Miniature Poodles, Dachshunds, and Chihuahuas.

Symptoms



1. **Coughing:** Often due to the enlargement of the heart pressing on the trachea.
2. **Breathing Difficulties:** Including rapid or labored breathing.
3. **Exercise Intolerance:** Reduced ability to exercise or play.
4. **Fatigue and Weakness:** General lethargy and decreased energy levels.
5. **Heart Murmur:** Often detected during a routine veterinary exam.

6. Collapse or Fainting: In severe cases, due to poor blood flow.

Diagnosis



Diagnosis typically involves:

- 1. Physical Examination: Detection of a heart murmur.**
- 2. Chest X-rays: To assess heart size and lung condition.**
- 3. Echocardiography (Ultrasound): To visualize the heart structure and function.**
- 4. Electrocardiogram (ECG): To evaluate the electrical activity of the heart.**
- 5. Blood Tests: To check for other health issues that may complicate the condition.**

Treatment



Treatment focuses on managing the symptoms and slowing the progression of the disease:

- 1. Medications: Including diuretics to reduce fluid buildup, ACE inhibitors to lower blood pressure, and medications to improve heart function.**
- 2. Dietary Changes: Low-sodium diets to reduce fluid retention.**

- 3. Regular Monitoring:** Regular veterinary check-ups to monitor the progression of the disease.
- 4. Surgery:** In some severe cases, surgical repair or replacement of the mitral valve may be considered.

Prognosis

The prognosis for dogs with MVD varies. Many dogs can live for years with the condition if it is managed properly, though it is a progressive disease that can lead to heart failure over time.

Prevention

While there is no sure way to prevent Mitral Valve Disease in Dogs, regular veterinary check-ups can help catch the disease early, and a healthy lifestyle can support overall heart health. For breeds prone to MVD, breeders may screen for heart conditions to reduce the incidence in future generations.

If you suspect your dog might have MVD, consult your veterinarian for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment plan.