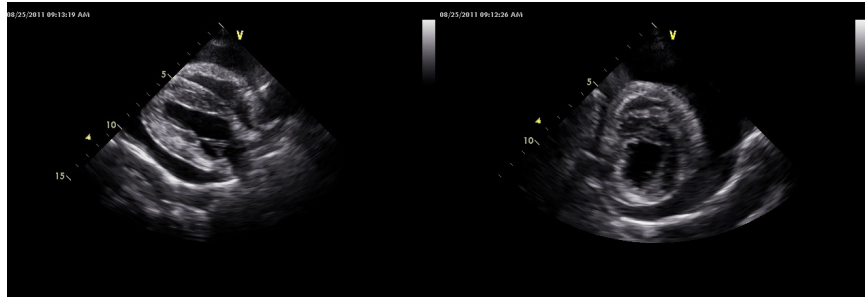


PERICARDIAL EFFUSION



Pericardial Effusion is when there is an inappropriately large volume of fluid in the sac around the heart. As this fluid volume increases it puts pressure on the heart and impacts the filling of the heart. There are a number of causes of pericardial effusion but many of these do not cause enough fluid to compress the heart. The most common causes of fluid that compresses the heart include neoplastic causes (hemangiosarcoma, chemodectoma, mesothelioma and less commonly lymphoma) and idiopathic causes (meaning the fluid occurs but the cause is unknown). Infectious and coagulopathic causes are possible but less likely. Pericardial effusion often presents as an emergency due to the impact on the heart. The emergency treatment is to perform a pericardiocentesis. This is performed by inserting a catheter in the sac around the heart to remove the fluid to alleviate the compression on the heart. This fluid is often sent out for analysis to provide insight into the cause of this condition. The prognosis is variable depending on the underlying cause.

Idiopathic Pericardial Effusion: The underlying cause of this disease process is unknown. If the pericardial effusion recurs then removing part of the pericardium may be necessary to eliminate the symptoms associated with this disease.

Hemangiosarcoma: This is a tumor that is typically associated with the right atrium/auricle in the heart. It is a fast growing tumor that metastasizes (spreads to other parts of the body) rapidly. If the tumor is surgically resectable then the best treatment option includes surgical resection of the tumor followed by chemotherapy. Chemotherapy alone, with or without removal of part of the pericardium, may decrease the tumor growth rate and effusion rate. Overall the prognosis is poor.

Chemodectoma: This tumor is slow growing and slow to spread. Brachycephalic breed dogs are overrepresented for this tumor type. Dogs with pericardial effusion due to a chemodectoma often require a partial removal of the pericardium to alleviate symptoms. The tumor itself is unlikely to be surgically resectable due to the type of cells that make up the tumor as well as the location of the tumor.