

Hypertension

High blood pressure is a very common condition in animals, just as in people. Your vet may suspect this due to you noticing suspicious signs at home, such as wobbliness, or from clues on a clinical examination. These may reflect some of the effects high blood pressure can have on other organs such as the eyes (wide pupils or possible blindness), the heart (a murmur or irregularity) and the kidneys (excessive thirst and urination).

Blood pressure measurement is important in animals, just as it is in people. It is a simple procedure requiring just a small patch of fur to be clipped on one of your pet's paws. A cuff is placed around the leg, and some air is used to inflate the cuff which temporarily occludes the blood supply to the paw. When the air, and therefore the pressure is released, blood flow returns and a small probe placed on your pet's paw detects the pressure at which the flow returns, allowing a blood pressure reading to be made. Depending on your pet's temperament, this may be taken during a routine appointment, or we may ask you to leave your pet with us for a few hours to acclimatise him/her with us and reduce effects of stress on readings. This procedure is performed conscious and is non invasive and painless.

Although it can occur as an independent condition, many cases have an underlying disease process which may need to be specifically addressed. Depending on your pet's individual clinical symptoms, further tests may therefore be required to check for underlying causes such as:

- 1) Blood and urine samples to check for kidney function
- 2) Blood samples for thyroid function
- 3) Echocardiogram (heart scan) and/or ECG to assess the heart

It is important to treat high blood pressure as the continual high pressures in the blood vessels can cause other disease problems in various organs:

- The eyes: the retina at the back of the eye contains lots of tiny blood vessels which under high pressures can rupture causing bleeding and possible detachment with risk of blindness.
- The kidneys: Despite being a possible initiator of high blood pressure, the resulting pressures can actually damage the kidney tissues due to excessive protein to be pushed through the kidneys.
- The heart: high blood pressure causes the heart to have to work harder. The heart being a muscle can therefore become thicker, further reducing its function. However treating the high blood pressure can sometimes reverse these cardiac effects and reduce the chance of progressive heart disease.
- The brain: high pressures can cause bleeds within the brain resulting in signs similar to a stroke, or possibly a fit.

Treatment involves long-term use of a human drug called amlodipine. There is not a product produced specifically for use in animals, hence we use the human drug 'off license'. You will have to sign a specific form to allow your vet to prescribe this. Different patients require different dosages, hence in the early stages of treatment it will be necessary for your pet to return for repeat blood pressure measurements to allow dosage adjustment if indicated. Some patients may require additional medications to get the blood pressure under control, or additionally treat other related or underlying conditions. Once your pet is stable, he/she will need to have intermittent checks to make sure his/her requirements have not changed.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at Chestnut Vets, on **01920 468874** if you have any questions about your pet's condition.

