

Heart Health – Will You Be Mine (for how long)?

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February lures our attention to valentines as the heart symbol is found nearly everywhere. The heart is the one organ intricately composed of muscle and nerve cells designed to receive de-oxygenated blood, send it on to the lungs for oxygenation and then return the newly oxygenated blood via a network of vessels to continue life. This miraculous organ cleverly relies on itself for its systematic uninterrupted plan to exist. This coexistence is similar to our pet's daily needs from us as we provide their food, their exercise, and their companionship. If done right, the heart wins!

Heart disease may have a genetic aspect for some pets, but often it is acquired through lack of exercise and poor dietary habits, which lead to obesity. When the heart's workload increases, eventually performance is compromised. Heartworms, which are easily prevented today, can also be a silent thief of your pet's cardiac life. Young pets seemingly cruise along without a worry, but older pets may show signs of degenerative diseases including heart disease. Signs your pet may have heart related issues will vary based on the stage of heart related disease. In early stages, there may be no signs or subtle signs. With time, lethargy, coughing, and breathing difficulty may be noticed by the owner. Veterinarians can detect murmurs or irregular rhythms or see enlarged heart silhouettes on radiographs or detect improper functioning heart valves with ultrasound. As the disease progresses, the pet has increased difficulty breathing, may have fainting episodes, pronounced exercise intolerance, lose the desire to eat and begin to lose weight. While some forms of cardiac disease can be treated, the heart can never be restored and medications become important to maintain life.

Giving our pets "**Heart Health**" begins with our pet's ideal weight and wellbeing. Our pet's lifestyle, age, breed, current weight and health status determines the type of diet we select. Special needs pets often require frequent monitoring by their veterinarian to recommend or adjust the ideal diet. Couch pillows will have more energy when they shave a few pounds so we can see their waists and feel their ribs. We must remember "love" does not equal an unlimited supply of "food" or "treats." It is the calories in the food - not the cups of food. We begin showing our "love" by giving low-cal treats or by breaking up larger treats into small portions. Your pet doesn't relate the treat size to the amount of "love" you give, only that you gave "love."

For pets starting their trek to fitness, muscle strength or joint agility may be lacking resulting in exhaustion or less willingness to join in the exercise program. *They may give up, but you shouldn't!* Wapiti Labs' Strength Formula and Wapiti Labs' Mobility Formula can aid your pet's potential to become heart healthy. Elk velvet antler, a natural component of Wapiti Labs' formulas is a source of the key joint support components --- chondroitin sulfate, glucosamine and hyaluronic acid. In addition, elk velvet antler also contains pantocrine which has been cited to increase work capacity, decrease training time recovery, act as an adaptogen to decrease muscle fatigue and have a stimulating effect.¹

Like humans, daily exercise benefits our pet's well being and heart health. The clever part about helping your pet achieve "**Heart Health**" is that your own heart becomes heart healthy! Say YES! Give your pet and yourself a Valentine gift everyday by selecting the appropriate diet and maintaining a fit lifestyle with a body conditioning program they'll be yours for a long, long time.

1. Moreau, M, Dupuis, J, Bonneau, NH, Lecuyer, M. Clinical evaluation of a powder of quality elk velvet antler for the treatment of osteoarthritis in dogs. Can Vet J 2004 Feb; 45(2): 133-139.

