



UC DAVIS OFFERS CARDIOLOGY SUPPORT TO VETERINARIANS

■ Rob Warren, UC Davis VMTH Communications & Marketing Officer

Cardiology cases can sometimes be difficult for general wellness practitioners to treat. Most GPs are confident to realize when cardiac issues arise, but lack the advanced training to treat a potentially complicated case. The Cardiology Service at the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (VMTH) can help in determining the severity of cases. The hospital maintains a cardiology hotline available for immediate consultations on cardiac cases with board-certified cardiology specialists, whether or not veterinarians intend to refer the case to UC Davis. UC Davis is able to consult on cases, review diagnostic test results and help craft a cardiology treatment plan. For immediate assistance, veterinarians can reach a faculty member directly at (530) 979-0751. (Please note this hotline is for veterinarians only. Animal owners should consult with their veterinarians about their animals' cardiac concerns, not this hotline.)

The Cardiology Service at UC Davis consists of five board-certified faculty veterinarians – three at the VMTH and two at its satellite facility, the UC Veterinary Medical Center, San Diego. They are complemented by three resident veterinarians training to be cardiology specialists, and technical staff dedicated to providing compassionate, state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment services to animals with cardiovascular disease.

The majority of the Cardiology Service's patients are dogs and cats, but they regularly examine horses and exotic pets like birds, reptiles, small mammals and zoo animals. Common reasons for cardiac examination in animals include heart murmurs, irregular heartbeats, respiratory complaints, and weakness or fainting. The majority of patients can be completely evaluated using only non-invasive examination methods. They offer minimally invasive (catheter-based) interventions to repair or improve certain congenital heart defects, and have extensive experience implanting cardiac pacemakers in dogs with abnormally slow heart beats.

A few recent successes with the Cardiology Service include:

Rocket, a 10-year-old Boston terrier, that was referred to UC Davis after his veterinarian discovered an extremely low heart rate. Rocket was diagnosed with a complete or 3rd degree atrioventricular (AV) block. His slower heart



Vanilla Bean was saved with a rare heart surgery at UC Davis that involved veterinarians collaborating with human physicians.

rate was not a long-term way for the heart to function, and studies have shown that dogs with 3rd degree AV block are at high risk of sudden death. Therefore, it was recommended that Rocket undergo the standard treatment for this condition – the placement of a permanent pacemaker to provide a normal heart rate again. Following a thorough evaluation to ensure that Rocket was a good candidate for the pacemaker, the UC Davis team successfully implanted a pacemaker the following day. UC Davis offers state-of-the-art pacemakers made especially for dogs. The battery lifespan for a brand new device is more than 10 years.

Vanilla Bean, a 1-year-old female Burmese cat, that was diagnosed by her veterinarian with cor triatriatum sinister, a rare congenital heart defect that does not allow blood to flow properly through the chambers. UC Davis veterinarians collaborated with UC Davis pediatric physicians, as the condition is also seen in children. Together, the team of doctors began the delicate procedure of correcting Vanilla Bean's defect, which involved opening her chest cavity to expose the heart and utilize a hybrid cutting balloon dilatation. The balloon cuts the restricting membrane between the chambers to allow blood to flow through it regularly. The surgery was a success, and Vanilla Bean slowly recovered. She is no longer in congestive heart failure, and is off all medications. **P**