

# St Bernards Buzz

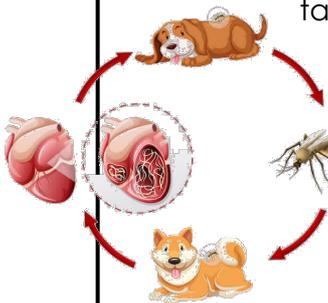
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With Valentine's Day in February, there's never a better time to talk about your pet's **Heart Health**, something which is just as important for our pets as it is for us. Just like people, a heart that is not working well will impact on your pet's health significantly.

## Patient of the Month - Mae

Mae is a lovely 11-month-old Labrador who has been coming to see us ever since she was a little pup. She's had her full course of puppy vaccinations as well as an injection of heartworm prevention – ProHeart and a booster. Heartworm is spread by mosquito bites and can be fatal in our canine friends. When infected, the worms will start to develop into adults and will live in the heart (hence the name heartworm). Even though the prevalence of heartworm is less of a risk here in SA (as opposed to the tropical states), our pets are still at risk of getting this nasty worm here. If you are planning to travel with your pet, it is a very important thing to consider and to take preventative measures. ProHeart injections will last for a year from when your pet has finished growing and is an ideal way to protect them against heartworm. We also stock over the counter products if you decide against the yearly injection, such as spots ons and chews, however these will only last 1 to 3 months depending on the product. In some cases, we may need to run a test to make sure your pet isn't already infected.



**Contact us for more information on heartworm prevention and get your pet protected like Mae the very happy Labrador!**



## Heart Health

Knowing the early signs of heart disease can really make a difference to your pet's life. It means you can seek medical help from us, we can start treatment early, your pet will feel better and, in most cases, live a longer life. Generally, Heart failure affects the pumping mechanism of the heart and oxygenated blood does not travel around your pet's body effectively. This can have an impact on your pet's overall health as blood ends up pooling in their lungs and/or abdomen leading to detrimental changes in other organs. Note that our feline friends seem to be very good at hiding signs of heart disease (and it's often harder to pick up these changes at home as we don't tend to take our cats for a walk around the block)!

**Signs to look out for in both cats and dogs:** Laboured or fast breathing – the most common signs in cats; An enlarged abdomen; Weight loss or poor appetite.

**Signs to look out for in dogs only:** Coughing, especially at night; A reluctance to exercise and tiring more easily on walks; Weakness or fainting associated with exercise.

If we are concerned about your pet's heart, we will initially recommend X-rays and an ultrasound of the heart which can be done in the clinic. An ECG or further examination with a heart specialist may also be required.

Thankfully we have several medications available to help improve your pet's heart function and management of heart disease is advancing quickly.

**If you think your pet is showing one or more of the above signs, it is important we see them for an examination.**

**Early treatment can help your pet lead a longer and happier life.**

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