



THE OFA & ACVIM ANNOUNCE CHANGES TO THE CARDIAC CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Effective October 1, 2020, several changes will go into effect regarding the cardiac certification programs administered by the OFA.

At the direction of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) Cardiology Specialty Group, the Advanced Cardiac Exams will **REQUIRE** an echocardiogram as part of the exam protocol. This change is to maximize the accuracy and utility of the certification program, and will help ensure that forms of heart disease (congenital or acquired) that may be difficult or impossible to identify on auscultation alone do not go undetected. Only echocardiographic examinations performed by board-certified veterinary cardiologists will be accepted (DACVIM/DECVIM Cardiology). All other existing criteria remain in place. The dog must be a minimum of 12 months of age at the time of the exam. And the exam has a two-tiered clearance structure which includes a congenital cardiac disease clearance valid for the life of the dog, and an adult onset disease clearance valid for 12 months. Additionally, Boxers and Doberman Pinschers require a Holter ECG within 3 months of the exam for a final clearance.

Going forward, the legacy clearance program known as the Congenital Cardiac Database will be renamed the Basic Cardiac Database. Basic Cardiac Exams are essentially auscultation only exams. The exams can be performed by any licensed veterinarian. The expertise of the examiner will continue to be noted by a suffix in the clearance number: P for general practitioners, S for specialists, and C for cardiologists. Normal and equivocal exam results will no longer reference congenital disease specifically, but refer to cardiac disease in general. Abnormal exams should indicate the suspected disease. Echocardiograms are no longer included in the Basic Cardiac Exam protocol. Since acquired heart disease may develop later, Basic Cardiac Exam clearances remain valid for one year, and annual examinations are recommended.

The following chart summarizes the exam protocols going forward:

EXAM TYPE	BASIC CARDIAC	ADVANCED CARDIAC
MINIMUM AGE FOR CERTIFICATION	12 Months	12 Months
EXAMINER QUALIFICATIONS	Any licensed veterinarian	Cardiologist ONLY (DACVIM/Cardiology)
EXAM METHODS		
AUSCULTATION	Required	Required
ECHOCARDIOGRAM	N/A	Required
ELECTROCARDIOGRAM	N/A	Optional
HOLTER ECG	N/A	Required for Boxers & Doberman Pinschers
CLEARANCE STRUCTURE	Normal cardiovascular exam - heart disease is not evident	Two-tiered clearance - congenital disease & adult onset disease
VALIDITY PERIOD	One year, annual exams are recommended	Adult onset disease - valid for 12 months; annual exams are recommended. Congenital cardiac disease clearance - valid for life