

New tools for evaluating quality of life for cats, dogs with heart disease

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(Phys.org) -- Quality of life has become accepted as an important predictor of survival among human patients with heart failure. Now veterinarians at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University have developed two surveys that may prove to be similarly useful in evaluating the quality of life for dogs and cats with heart disease.

Known as "FETCH" (Functional Evaluation of Cardiac Health) and "CATCH" (Cats' Assessment Tool for Cardiac Health), the surveys ask owners to rank aspects of their dog's or cat's health on a scale of 0 to 5. Veterinarians are then able to assess the animal's perceived quality of life, which may inform decisions about treatment, nutrition or even euthanasia.

Researchers found that the FETCH and CATCH scores correlated well to the International Small Animal [Cardiac Health](#) Council (ISACHC) classification for [disease severity](#).

Results of the CATCH evaluation were published in the May 15 edition of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, building on the earlier publication of the FETCH study.

"Studies have indicated that pet owners value quality of life much more than longevity in their animals," said Professor of Clinical Sciences Lisa M. Freeman, board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition. "We want our dogs and cats to have happy lives, and we believe this tool is a helpful in evaluating whether our pets still do."

The survey tools were developed by Freeman and Professor of Clinical Sciences John E. Rush, board-certified cardiologist and criticalist at the veterinary school's Foster Hospital for Small Animals. Freeman and Rush set out to create and evaluate a tool for pets similar to the Minnesota Living with [Heart Failure](#) Questionnaire, one of the most widely used evaluation tools in human cardiology.

The CATCH tool was validated using studies in 75 cats at Tufts' Foster Hospital for [Small Animals](#), the University of Pennsylvania's Medical School and the VCA Animal Care Center of Sonoma County (Rohert Park, Calif.), then tested in 200 cats at the three previous sites, as well as Oregon State University, Massachusetts Veterinary Referral Hospital (Woburn, Mass.) and Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston.

The work on the tools will continue to measure their responsiveness to medical treatment and create a clinical and research tool for clinicians, Freeman said.

More information: *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2012 May 15;240(10):1188-93.

Provided by Tufts University

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