

Sleeping Respiratory Rate

An increase in your pet's respiratory rate while sleeping is a very important early indicator that your pet may be developing congestive heart failure (CHF). Early detection can help limit how sick your pet will get, reduce the chances that your pet will have to stay in the hospital, and also help reduce the costs associated with heart failure treatment.

In general, all dogs and cats, with or without heart disease, have a sleeping respiratory rate of less than 30 breaths per minute. It is important to start monitoring pets with moderate to advanced heart disease that have a high risk of developing congestive heart failure. Sleeping respiratory rates should be recorded once daily. Once a pet has gone into congestive heart failure and is on diuretics, it is best to monitor their respiratory rate twice daily.

Wait until your pet is sleeping. It is important that cats are not purring when you count their respiratory rate. A breath is when the chest has moved up and back down. Use your watch or phone to time 30 seconds and count the number of breaths. Next multiply the number of breaths that you counted in 30 seconds by 2 to get the number of breaths in 1 minute. Count the sleeping respiratory rate several times per day for a week while you are learning.

If your pet's sleeping respiratory rate is over 30 breaths per minute, repeat the count a few more times over the next hour to be sure it is consistent. If your pet's sleeping respiratory rate increases more than 25% from his/hers normal baseline, that is also considered an increased respiratory rate. If the respiratory rate is consistently increased contact your veterinarian or cardiologist right away.