Respiratory Rate Chart

Introduction

Respiratory rate (RR) is the number of breaths per minute. Congestive heart failure (CHF) is characterised by accumulation of fluid in the lungs, which eventually causes fast and laboured breathing. The presence of CHF should be confirmed with chest radiographs. However, measurement of RR represents a simple way to monitor onset and progression of the disease, as well as the response to medical treatment.

How to measure respiratory rate

Normal RR (20-40 breaths per minute-bpm) is assessed when the cat is resting, ideally while asleep in a quiet environment. With a watch with a second hand, count the number of breaths (deep movements of the chest) for one minute. If it is difficult to determine when the cat is breathing, you can place a cotton fluff, a tissue or a pocket mirror by your pet's nostrils and look for tissue movement or fogging on the mirror. Do not attempt to count breaths when the cat is purring. In case of abnormal counts, please repeat the measurement after a few minutes.

The respiratory rate significantly increases in cats in CHF. However, other conditions can increase the RR, such as exercise, excitement and pain. This is why it is important to measure it at rest.

Date	Time	RR (bpm)

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Edited by: Dr Luca Ferasin DVM PhD CertVC DipECVIM-Ca (Cardiology) MRCVS, European Specialist in Veterinary Cardiology

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