



THE KENNEL CLUB
DOG HEALTH

The Kennel Club Heart Scheme for Cavalier King Charles Spaniels

Supported by the Veterinary
Cardiovascular Society



The scheme

What is the scheme?

The Kennel Club Heart Scheme assesses Cavalier King Charles Spaniels for Mitral Valve Disease and other potentially significant heart disease.

The scheme advises owners if their dog is affected by heart disease and gives guidance to breeders on how to lower the risk of producing affected puppies. A number of approved cardiologists (vets specially trained in heart conditions) have been appointed to carry out heart grading on dogs.

What are heart murmurs and what is Mitral Valve Disease?

A heart murmur is an unusual sound made by the heart during its cycle of beating and can be a sign of heart disease. Mitral Valve Disease (MVD) is a type of heart disease that is caused by one of the valves in the heart leaking. This leaking valve can get worse over time and can cause the heart to become enlarged and less effective.



The assessment

At what age should my dog first be assessed?

Your dog must be at least 18 months old to participate in the scheme. To gain the maximum benefit from the scheme, dogs should ideally first be assessed at around 2 years of age and then re-assessed every two years. If you are thinking of breeding from your dog you should always have them graded first.

How can I book an assessment?

Please contact health@thekennelclub.org.uk for details of cardiologists and sessions. Please note that in most cases your local vet will not be able to assess your dog for this scheme.

How much will it cost?

Each cardiologist will have their own assessment fee which may vary between cardiologists. Please ask the cardiologist about their fee before booking an appointment.

What do I need to bring to the assessment?

You will need to bring your dog's Kennel Club registration certificate and microchip identification.

What happens during the assessment?

Your cardiologist will use two non-invasive techniques to check your dog's heart. The cardiologist will begin by using a stethoscope to listen to your dog's heart for signs of a heart murmur. They will use their findings to give your dog a murmur grade. After this they will use an echocardiogram to scan your dog's heart valves and give a mitral valve prolapse grade. The cardiologist will also record other measurements on the scan which may be used for research purposes, but these will not be recorded on your test certificate.

The cardiologist will discuss your dog's grading and will record the findings on an official form. You will receive a copy of the form. The assessor will keep a copy for their records and the Kennel Club will be informed of the result for online publication.

How often should my dog be assessed?

Your dog should have an assessment every two years to monitor any change, particularly if they are being used for breeding. If your dog has its first test under 4 years of age, the test certificate will expire on the dog's 4th birthday. The 4-year-old test will expire on the dog's 6th birthday etc.

Grading and advice

What does each grade mean?

Your dog is assigned two grades. The first is a mitral murmur grade of 0, 1, 2 or 3+ which is based on standard protocols for grading mitral murmurs. A murmur is graded in relation to the intensity of the other heart sounds; the louder the murmur, the higher the grade. This grading is exactly the same as the ones used in other auscultation (stethoscope examination) schemes. If your dog has a murmur which is not considered to be due to Mitral Valve Disease, then it will be noted separately to the mitral murmur grade in the comments box (e.g. innocent murmurs, murmurs of congenital heart disease).

The second grade is based on the degree of mitral valve prolapse (MVP) seen on the heart scan. MVP is 'ballooning' of the mitral valve secondary to a structural abnormality of the valve. This can happen before the dog has a murmur. The degree of prolapse will be measured and a grade will be given based on a standard protocol, with more significant prolapse resulting in a higher MVP grade.

Breeding advice

The breeding advice based on this scheme varies depending on the two grades that your dog receives, and also the age they are tested.

As Mitral Valve Disease develops as a dog ages, dogs might develop a murmur or mitral valve prolapse as they get older. The 'traffic light' system therefore takes in to account the age of the dog. A dog with higher murmur and/or prolapse grades as a young dog would be considered of more concern than an older dog with the same grades.

The way that MVD is inherited is not fully understood and is not always entirely predictable. Using the traffic light system below can help you reduce the chances of breeding puppies affected by heart disease. However, even if used responsibly, this guidance cannot guarantee that a puppy from two "green" parents will be free from MVD.



Breeding guidelines

Green: These dogs have the lowest risk of developing clinical MVD and the lowest risk of passing the condition on to any offspring.

Amber: These dogs have a higher risk of developing and/or passing on the condition to offspring. Only amber dogs that are in excellent health, and have good results from other screening schemes, may be used cautiously for breeding, and only with a mate categorised as green, preferably at four years of age or older.

Red: These dogs have the greatest risk of passing the condition to offspring and so should not be used for breeding.

Please note that dogs considered by the cardiologist to have an innocent murmur (i.e. a murmur that is NOT related to MVD or another significant heart defect) should be considered to be green under the traffic light system. Dogs considered to have another significant heart defect (e.g. congenital heart defect) should be considered to be red under the traffic light system. This will be clearly stated on your testing certificate.

This advice is summarised in the following tables. The advice may change, however, as further research is undertaken.



2 years of age

Mitral murmur grade /Mitral Valve Prolapse	Murmur grade 0	Murmur grade 1	Murmur grade 2	Murmur grade 3+
Mitral Valve Prolapse 0	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 1	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 2	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 3	Red	Red	Red	Red

4 years of age

Mitral murmur grade /Mitral Valve Prolapse	Murmur grade 0	Murmur grade 1	Murmur grade 2	Murmur grade 3+
Mitral Valve Prolapse 0	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 1	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 2	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 3	Red	Red	Red	Red

6 years of age and older

Mitral murmur grade /Mitral Valve Prolapse	Murmur grade 0	Murmur grade 1	Murmur grade 2	Murmur grade 3+
Mitral Valve Prolapse 0	Green	Green	Green	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 1	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 2	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Mitral Valve Prolapse 3	Red	Red	Red	Red

Results

What happens with my result?

Your dog's grades will be recorded on the Kennel Club's database and will be published in one or more of the following: the Breed Records Supplement, on the registration certificate, the Kennel Club website (Health Test Results Finder and Health Pages).

Can I appeal my dog's grade?

If you wish to appeal your grade please contact the Kennel Club at health@thekennelclub.org.uk who will provide you with the appeals procedure and administer your appeal.





Contact information

Correspondence address and contact information:

Health Results Appeal
Breeder Services Dept
The Kennel Club
Clarges Street
Piccadilly
London
W1J 8AB

Email: health@thekennelclub.org.uk



THE KENNEL CLUB
Making a difference for dogs