



## The Barkley Fund Update – December, 2015

### **Research Advances - Cats**

- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a heart disease that affects 10-15% of cats but, unfortunately, heart disease in cats typically receives little attention. Veterinarians at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine are working to address this important problem with the help of the Barkley Fund.
- A randomized controlled clinical trial conducted by Cummings' cardiology and nutrition specialists showed that diet can positively impact the heart in cats with HCM. This study was published in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine.
- Medical treatment of cats with heart disease can be challenging, especially in those with congestive heart failure (fluid accumulation due to underlying heart disease). A study conducted by Cummings' cardiologists showed that measurement of a protein in the blood can help to guide treatment of cats with congestive heart failure.
- Tufts' veterinary and human cardiologists are working together to better understand HCM, which also occurs in people. Using information from cats with this disease can help to better treat people with HCM, and results from human clinical trials can improve the treatment of cats with this disease.

### **Research Advances - Dogs**

- Approximately 11% of all dogs have heart disease, primarily a disease called degenerative mitral valve disease (DMVD). While there are important genetic risks for DMVD, there also may be dietary factors that play a role in this disease. The Cummings cardiology and nutrition team identified a number of dietary factors that could play a role in DMVD which are now being studied in dogs with this common disease to help find ways that diet could help to treat (and even prevent) heart disease in dogs.
- Muscle loss is a common problem in dogs with congestive heart failure (cardiac cachexia). The cardiology and nutrition team is developing a non-invasive ultrasound method to accurately measure muscle mass.
- The cardiology and nutrition team recently published a paper in the Journal of Veterinary Cardiology that reported the results of a study that showed that a novel drug can improve muscle mass in dogs with severe congestive heart failure.

### **Conferences**

- Dr. John Rush attended a seminar in Minnesota hosted by Boston Scientific to employ new techniques for placement of pacemakers in dogs with slow heart rates.

### **Future Goals**

- The Barkley Fund helped to develop the Tufts HeartSmart website. The main objective of this website is to provide pet owners with a clear and credible information source about diagnosis and treatment of heart disease in dogs and cats. This website will continue to be revised with new and useful information, with the help of the Barkley Fund. Visit the HeartSmart website at ([www.tufts.edu/vet/heartsmart](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/heartsmart))

