

### ***How often should I count the resting/sleeping breathing rate in my pet?***

Typically your veterinarian will have you count the breathing rate once per day for a week when you are learning so that you get comfortable doing it. This way you and your veterinarian can also learn your pets' actual resting/sleeping breathing rate.

### ***If your pet has asymptomatic heart disease:***

Home breathing rates need not be evaluated in all pets with asymptomatic heart disease. Your veterinarian will tell you if and when it is time to start doing this in your pet. In general it is most important to start in pets with advanced asymptomatic heart disease that have a high risk of developing heart failure

within the next year. In this case breathing rates are typically recorded once or twice per week although sometimes your veterinarian may ask you to do it once per day.

### ***If your pet has heart failure:***

Home breathing rate should be evaluated once per day in all pets that have heart failure and are now taking medications such as furosemide.

### ***Where can I find free smartphone apps for home breathing rate?***

There are free smartphone apps for the iPhone, Droid, BlackBerry that can help you keep track of your dog's home breathing rate. Search the app store for 'your dog's heart resting breathing rate.'



To watch a video on how to count your pet's respiratory rate, go to:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEptzj6G-Jk>



**VETERINARY MEDICINE  
& BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**  
TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY

**Small Animal Clinical Sciences  
Cardiology Service**

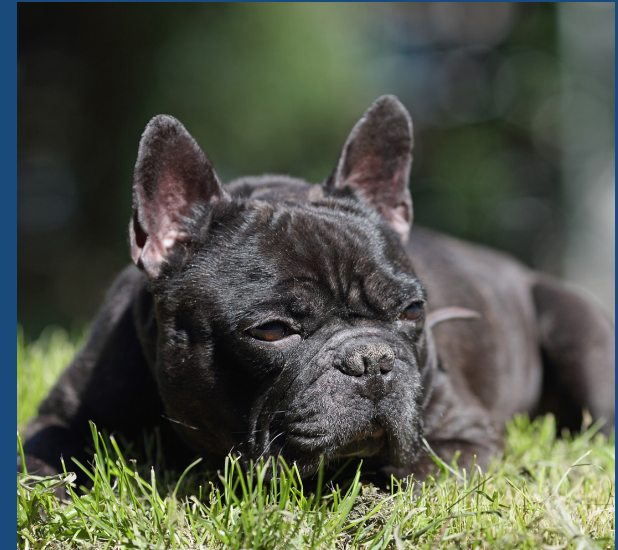
**College of Veterinary Medicine  
& Biomedical Sciences**

Texas A&M University  
4474 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-4474  
Tel 979.845.2351  
Fax 979.845.6978

[http://vethospital.tamu.edu/  
small-animal-hospital/cardiology](http://vethospital.tamu.edu/small-animal-hospital/cardiology)

Client Information Series

# Measuring Your Pet's Breathing Rate



**VETERINARY MEDICAL  
TEACHING HOSPITAL**  
TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY

## ***Did you know ...***

***that you can help your veterinarian treat your pet's heart disease by counting their breathing rate at home and watching for other clues (clinical signs) that your pet is not doing well?***

***Learn how to become part of your pet's care team!***

### ***Why should I evaluate my pet's breathing rate at home?***

Increases in your pet's breathing rate while resting quietly or sleeping is a very important early clue ('clinical sign') that your pet may be developing heart failure and needs to see your veterinarian. Since this is an early clue that heart failure is developing, by noticing you can help limit how sick your pet will get, reduce the chances that your pet will ever have to stay overnight in the hospital, and therefore also help reduce the costs associated with heart failure treatment.



### ***What is a normal resting/sleeping breathing rate for dogs and cats?***

In general, all dogs and cats, with or without heart disease, have a breathing rate of between 15-30 breaths every minute. Lower rates are even possible and are no cause for concern as long as your pet is otherwise healthy. Breathing rates are much higher than this when dogs and cats are hot, stressed or active but that is OK.

Resting/sleeping breathing rates that are consistently greater than approximately 30 per minute are increased and abnormal. In some cases rates lower than 30 per minute may be considered increased and abnormal by your veterinarian. You should ask your veterinarian what rate is considered increased and abnormal for your dog or cat.

### ***Clinical signs that may be associated with heart disease or heart failure in dogs and cats, include:***

- Fast breathing when resting or sleeping (> 30 breaths per minute)
- Increased effort associated with breathing
- Restless sleeping, moving around a lot and changing positions
- Coughing or gagging
- Weakness
- Reduced ability to exercise
- Collapse or fainting
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Distended belly
- Depressed attitude or quiet and not interactive

#### ***Cat only***

- Hind leg lameness or weakness
- Hind end paralysis
- Pain

### ***How do I count the resting/sleeping breathing rate in my pet?***

Wait until your pet is sleeping quietly (preferred) or resting calmly and quietly. It is important that cats not be purring when you count their breathing rate. The sleeping breathing rate is typically a little lower than the resting breathing rate. Then watch the chest. It moves in and out as dogs and cats breathe. One breath is counted when the chest has moved in and out once. Use your watch or phone to time 30 sec then count how many breaths occur in 30 sec. Next multiply the number of breaths that you counted in 30 sec by 2 to get the number of breaths in 60 sec or 1 minute.

Alternatively, you can count the total number of breaths that occur in 60 sec (1 min) and then there is no need to multiply. Next you need to keep a record of the breathing rates you count by writing them down somewhere such as on your calendar.

### ***How To Calculate My Pet's Home Breathing Rate***

$$\# \text{ breaths in 30 sec} \times 2 = \text{breaths per minute}$$

**normal less than 30**

### ***What should I do if the resting/sleeping breathing rate is increased in my pet?***

The first thing to do is to count it a few times over the next couple of hours to be sure it is a consistent finding. If the breathing rate is consistently increased then you need to contact your veterinarian. Typically your veterinarian will recommend a recheck appointment in the next day or two so medications can be adjusted.

*Note: If the resting/sleeping breathing rate is increased and other 'clinical signs' as outlined below are also observed then the situation may represent an emergency. In this case, especially if it is after hours you may need to go to a veterinary emergency center.*

