Resting Respiratory Rates

A resting respiratory rate is the number of times an individual takes a complete breath (in and out) within a 60-second period while at rest or sleeping (as opposed to when active, playing, or dreaming).

Respiratory rates can be helpful in monitoring pets with heart disease or those at risk of developing congestive heart failure (fluid in or around the lungs). This type of monitoring helps you to discover congestive heart failure before the condition develops into an emergency situation, potentially requiring hospitalization and oxygen therapy.

How to measure your pet's resting respiratory rate:

1) Wait until your pet is sleeping soundly (i.e. not dreaming), and not panting or purring.

2) Count the number of times the chest rises and falls (one full rise and fall equals one breath) over 60 seconds. You can also count the number of times your pet breathes over 30 seconds and multiply by 2.

3) Do this at least once a day for 7 days and record your pet's resting respiratory rate on your calendar. This will give you a feel for their average resting respiratory rate.

Most animals have a normal resting respiratory rate with breaths per minute ranging between the mid-teens to mid-thirties, depending on the breed, weight, and age. In general, a resting respiratory rate over 30 breaths per minute is considered abnormal. For your individual pet, any increase more than 25% above their average resting respiratory rate is considered abnormal.

If you discover an elevated resting respiratory rate in your pet (without any evidence of difficulty breathing, increase in cough, or change in character of cough), recheck their resting respiratory rate again in 30-60 minutes. If your pet's resting respiratory rate remains elevated, please call our office to schedule an evaluation. At any time, if your pet has an increase in respiratory effort, increase in cough, or change in character of cough, ***please contact us immediately.***

There are apps available for both iPhone and Android for recording respiratory rates. Find them by searching for "Resting Respiratory Rate" in the app store on your phone.