



OVERVIEW OF RECENT CHANGES TO THE OFA CARDIAC CLEARANCES

Since April of 2016 the Orthopedic Foundation of America (OFA) has maintained two separate and distinct cardiac clearance databases, the Basic Cardiac Database (BCD), and the Advanced Cardiac Database (ACD). The purpose of these databases is to gather data regarding suspected or known genetic heart disease in dogs and provide guidance to breeders regarding use of dogs in a breeding program. Over the last few years, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) Cardiac Health Committee, in collaboration with the OFA, has worked to update these databases to be more effective for their intended purposes.

The BCD is now an auscultation only examination which can be performed by any veterinarian, including general practitioners. As before, the resulting OFA clearance number designates the expertise of the examiner by assigning appropriate suffixes (P = General Practitioner, S = Specialist, C = Cardiologist). Inclusion of the examination results in the database are solely at the discretion of the dog owners. Changes to this database include removal of the reporting of echocardiographic findings and a restructuring of the application form. The basic cardiac application (BCA) is available for download at www.offa.org.

The ACD provides two levels of clearance (congenital and adult-onset cardiac disease). As with the BCD, the minimum age for clearance is 12 months, with clearance from congenital cardiac disease being lifelong and clearance from adult-onset cardiac disease being valid for 1 year. For breeds with well documented arrhythmogenic disorders and scientific data to support the predictive value of Holter testing (Boxers and Doberman pinschers), there is also a mandatory requirement for Holter testing. There was a brief period where the Holter requirement was extended to other breeds. After much discussion among the committee members, the veterinary cardiology community at large, and after a vote with overwhelming agreement, the committee has determined there is a lack substantial scientific evidence and/or consensus to support mandatory Holter testing in other breeds. As such, the mandatory requirement for Holter testing in breeds other than Boxers and Doberman pinschers, has been removed from the program. As more scientific knowledge is gained with breed specific cardiac diseases, these recommendations may change. The results of the examination are provided directly to OFA by the examining cardiologist for improved statistically tracking. Additionally, the owner of the dog may submit their copy of the form for obtaining clearances. The advanced cardiac application (ACA) has also undergone an extensive restructuring. The ACA is a hardcopy triplicate form which must be obtained from the OFA by a board-certified cardiologist that is registered with the OFA.

Key Features of the OFA Cardiac Clearances:

Basic Cardiology Database (BCD)/Basic Cardiac Application (BCA)

1. Auscultation only – echocardiographic findings or findings from other ancillary studies cannot be submitted
2. Any licensed veterinarian can perform the examination
3. Results are submitted voluntarily by the owner of the dog for clearance and for addition of the results to the scientific database
4. Application forms can be downloaded online (www.offa.org)

Advanced Cardiac Database (ACD)/Advanced Cardiac Application (ACA)

1. The examination can only be performed by a board-certified veterinary cardiologist with active diplomat status in either the ACVIM or ECVIM.
2. An echocardiogram is no longer an optional feature and is now required

3. Holter test is required ONLY for Boxers and Doberman Pinschers and must be completed within 90 days of the echocardiogram. A separate application is required to submit results from Holter testing. Holter testing can be performed by any qualified service. However, interpretation of the Holter results must be done by a board-certified veterinary cardiologist with active diplomat status in either the ACVIM or ECVIM.
4. Applications forms are hardcopy and must be obtained from the OFA.
5. The owner of the dog voluntarily submits the results to the OFA for clearance. The examining cardiologist can submit an anonymous copy of the results to the scientific database.

More information can be found in the ACA Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines manual. You may also contact the OFA, a member of the ACVIM Cardiac Health Committee or any board-certified cardiologist.