

## PACEMAKER THERAPY



Pacemaker therapy is utilized in our veterinary patients that are symptomatic for a bradyarrhythmia (inappropriately slow heart rate). The most common arrhythmias that are treated with pacemaker therapy are 3<sup>rd</sup> degree atrioventricular block, sick sinus syndrome, or atrial standstill.

Pacemaker implantation is a surgical procedure that requires guidance with fluoroscopy (continuous real time radiography). The jugular vein (large vein in the neck) is accessed surgically and the pacemaker lead is implanted in the right ventricle. The lead is attached to the generator (battery power for the pacemaker system) and the generator is fixed under the skin in the neck region. The pacemaker can be programmed externally using an interrogator, a programming device that communicates with the generator. This allows us to adjust the heart rate and check battery life from outside the patient using a wand that sits on the skin over the top of the generator.

For one month after pacemaker implantation, it is very important that your pet have strict confinement to allow the pacemaker to scar into place. This assists in decreasing the risk of lead dislodgement. The complication rate of pacemaker implantation is relatively low (less than 5% for major complications).

Minor complications include lead dislodgement and lead infection. Antibiotics are used post-operatively to decrease the risk of infection. For the rest of your pet's life, if an infection is suspected anywhere in the body (skin, ears, urinary tract, etc.), it should be treated aggressively to decrease the risk of pacemaker infection.

Every six months post-implantation, the pacemaker needs to be rechecked to make sure it's functioning properly and the battery life remains adequate. In general, the pacemakers we place have an average lifespan of six years. If your pet reaches the end of that generator's battery life, the generator can be replaced.

**Alpenglow Vets** 3640 Walnut St. Boulder, CO 80301 **phone** 303-443-GLOW (4569)

**VRCC** 3550 South Jason St. Englewood, CO 80110 **phone** 303-874-2094

**Colorado Springs** at Animal Emergency Care Center North **appointments** 303-874-2094

[www.RMVCcolorado.com](http://www.RMVCcolorado.com)