

Monitoring Respiratory (Breathing) Rate at Home

If your pet has a condition that could lead to congestive heart failure, or has been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, Dr. Atkinson will likely recommend that you measure your pet's breathing rate. Increased breathing rate while resting quietly or sleeping is a very important early indication that your pet may be developing heart failure. By noticing the increased rate early, we can intervene earlier, and you can help reduce the costs associated with heart failure treatment and hospitalization.

Wait until your pet is sleeping quietly (preferred) or resting calmly and quietly. It is important that cats not be purring or dogs panting when you count their breathing rate. To perform a respiratory rate, count the number of breaths your pet takes in one minutes by counting the rise



and fall of the chest. Keep a record of the breathing rates you count by writing them down on the chart below. As an alternative, there are free smartphone apps that can help keep track. One is called "Resting Respiratory Rate", and another is "Cardalis". Search your app store for "resting respiratory rate veterinary". There are also collars available for purchase that can monitor your pet's activity, heart rate, and respiratory rate electronically. Voyce and PetPace are two such products.

A normal resting respiratory rate is usually between 16-30 breaths per minute but some pets are even slower. If you notice the breathing rate is elevated, 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 above 30 breaths per minutes or a 30% increase over the baseline measurements you have already established, then you need to contact Dr. Atkinson or your family veterinarian. Typically, Dr. Atkinson will recommend a recheck appointment in the next day or two so medications can be adjusted. If your pet is exhibiting a dramatically elevated resting respiratory rate and seems in distress or is lethargic, the situation may represent an emergency and require urgent action. Please contact Dr. Atkinson or seek an emergency evaluation at the veterinarian closest to you.