

Positioning a patient for accurate vertebral heart score measurement

Positioning is critical for accurate visualization of the heart

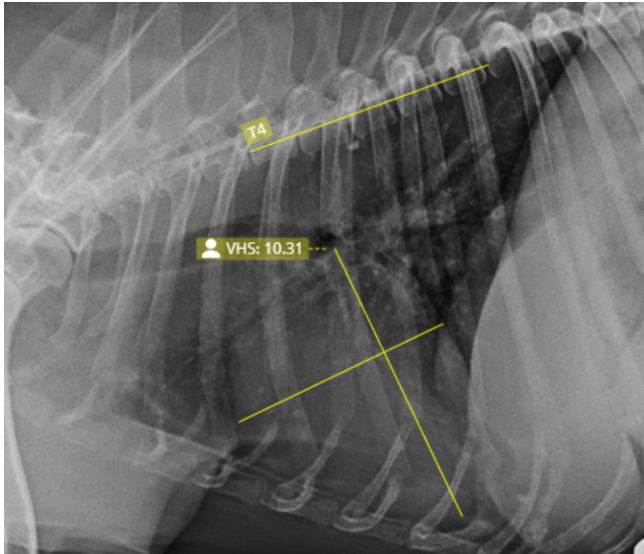
Guidelines:

- Place the patient in **right lateral recumbency** with **no axial rotation**
- Extend the **forelimbs forward**.
- Place the **head in a neutral position**.
- Take the radiograph as close to **peak inspiration** as possible.

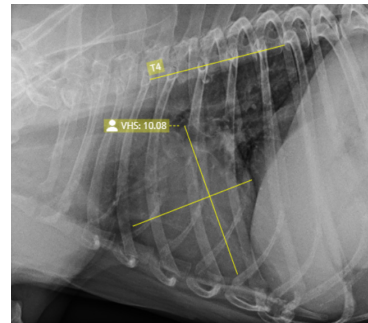
Use weighted sandbags, foam wedges, and other positioning aids, as needed, to ensure correct positioning.

Why patient positioning matters

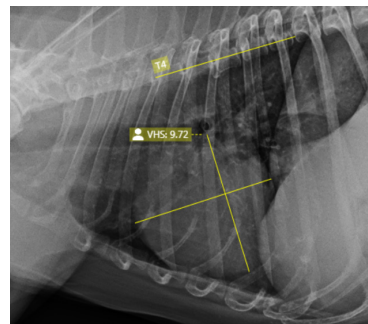
- Improper positioning can make the heart appear larger or smaller, depending on degree of rotation, and can cause cardiac chambers to appear abnormal and exaggerated in size.
- Failure to extend the forelimbs can cause poor visualization of the cranial cardiac border and cranial lung fields.
- Expiratory radiographs can mimic a diffuse pulmonary interstitial pattern.
- Improper positioning can generate misleading VHS values.



Correct (right lateral), VHS: **10.31**



Incorrect (rotated)
VHS:
10.08



Incorrect (left lateral)
VHS:
9.72

TIP: Find the VHS tool under  in the IDEXX Web PACS™ Advanced Viewer.

Correct positioning helps to ensure an accurate clinical picture and meaningful VHS values. Visit the [IDEXX Learning Center](#) for additional training modules on radiographic positioning.