**HISTORY AND SIGNALMENT**

For patients with suspected heart disease, the signalment (age, breed, sex) helps provide a differential diagnosis list. The signalment influences the relative importance of possible heart diseases (eg, endocarditis is rare in cats and dogs but more common in cows and horses) as well as some specific abnormalities (eg, breed predispositions for certain congenital defects).

Animals presenting with heart disease may have no clinical signs or have a history of exercise intolerance, weakness, dyspnea, tachypnea, abdominal distention (ascites), syncope (fainting), cyanosis, or anorexia and weight loss. Other historical findings are more species specific, including peripheral or ventral edema (horses and cows). Cats rarely demonstrate cough with heart disease and more commonly present with a history of dyspnea (which may be subtle and go unnoticed by the owner) and anorexia. Dogs with congestive heart failure (CHF), in contrast, commonly demonstrate cough and dyspnea as a presenting complaint.