7 reasons you should ask about ultrasound

Reason #1: Ultrasound can diagnose problems earlier
Just like with people, ultrasound allows the visualization of internal abnormalities that may not be captured by other means, such as x-rays. These abnormalities may include nodules, masses, cysts and abscesses. With ultrasound, a veterinarian can “see” conditions that would otherwise remain hidden and untreated in a pet.

Reason #2: Ultrasound can lead to more successful treatment outcomes
The earlier a condition is diagnosed with ultrasound and other diagnostic tests, the sooner a treatment plan can begin. Future ultrasound scans can be compared to track progression of a condition or response to treatment. As with people, early detection can lead to more successful treatment outcomes, and ultrasound is a powerful diagnostic tool to assist veterinarians in helping pets live healthier, happier, longer lives.

Reason #3: Ultrasound images can be shared electronically with specialists for consultation on your pet’s health
Ultrasound images, x-rays, cytology, lab results and pictures can be sent, along with a pet’s history and lab results, to some of the best specialists available to consult over your pet’s health.

Reason #4: Ultrasound is non-invasive and painless
Ultrasound is painless and non-invasive, using sound waves that are virtually risk free. Ultrasound can detect a problem deep within tissue or an organ without invasive surgery. If a sample of tissue is needed, an ultrasound-guided biopsy can be performed after your pet has been given appropriate anesthetics.

Reason #5: Ultrasound is quick
Scanning usually takes 30 to 60 minutes, and results may be seen immediately on a monitor and captured digitally for further evaluation by a radiologist.

Reason #6: Ultrasound can diagnose a wide range of medical conditions
Ultrasound is used to diagnose a wide range of benign and malignant diseases and medical conditions, including:

- stones within the urinary bladder, kidneys or gall bladder
- abnormalities of the gall bladder, urinary bladder, prostate or kidneys
- enlarged lymph nodes
- abnormal blood vessels
- fluid within the abdomen
- disease of the pancreas or liver
- adrenal abnormalities
- uterine infections
- the diagnosis of pregnancy and fetal viability
- diseases of the heart muscle (hypertrophic and dilated cardiomyopathy) and heart base tumors
- fluid around the heart (pericardial effusion)
- and much more

Reason #7: Ultrasound can be used to help young and healthy pets—not just older and sick ones
Not just older and sick pets can benefit from ultrasound. Ultrasound can also be used to detect congenital conditions in young pets and certain breeds, even if the pet appears to be perfectly healthy. For older and sick pets, an ultrasound can also be used to make more informed decisions about the course of treatment to take and extend a pet’s quality of life.
Answers to questions you may have about veterinary ultrasound

Why do veterinarians recommend ultrasounds for pets?
Generally speaking, ultrasound is the best, noninvasive, non-painful way to evaluate fluid filled and soft tissue organs in pets. These organs include the pet’s liver, spleen, kidney, pancreas, eyes, lymph nodes, testicles, intestinal tract, prostate, uterus/ovaries and heart.

How does an ultrasound work?
In short, an ultrasound system uses sound waves to painlessly penetrate a pet’s organs and capture images.

How is an ultrasound different than an x-ray?
Unlike x-rays, no radiation is used in an ultrasound exam. An x-ray reveals the size and shape of organs whereas an ultrasound can provide a complete internal view of the architecture of the organs. Ultrasound is often used in conjunction with x-rays to confirm a diagnosis.

Is an echocardiogram the same as an ultrasound?
An ultrasound used to examine a pet’s heart is called an echocardiogram and is one of the most common types of ultrasound exams performed on pets. It measures the heart’s wall thicknesses and chamber size. It can also help provide an assessment of the heart’s ability to move blood and determine if the valves are functioning properly.