Physical auscultation is an essential part of heart examination, even in the horse. Murmurs and arrhythmias may be detected using the stethoscope. Cardiac auscultation may be normal or cardiac arrhythmias or murmurs of valvular regurgitation may be detected. Frequent atrial fibrillation is a common heart arrhythmia in performance horses. Atrial fibrillation is usually detected by auscultation of the heart. Cardiac auscultation is an important part of the physical examination of the horse, particularly in the assessment of the patient's cardiovascular status.

Auscultation reveals a rapid regular rhythm if uniform ventricular tachycardia is present and an irregular rhythm if the ventricular action potential is not synchronized. Horses with atrial fibrillation usually have normal resting heart rates (28-40 beats/minute) but can occur at higher heart rates in the immediate post exercise period. Sustained atrial tachycardia is usually also present in horses with sinus bradycardia with heart rates of 20-40 beats/minute. Continuous atrial fibrillation can result in atrial flutter with a rapid ventricular response. Atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter are associated with an increased risk of stroke and other complications.

One of the unique features of the horse's cardiovascular system is the presence of a prominent and continuous murmur caused by the flow of blood through a normal pulmonic valve. Murmurs of mitral regurgitation have also been reported to increase in prevalence and intensity in horses in race training. Mitral regurgitation murmurs are usually harsh, plateau (band) shaped, > grade 3/6 (but can be a grade 1/6 holosystolic or pansystolic murmur). Mitral regurgitation murmurs are also occasionally ausculted in the left second intercostal space. Murmurs of tricuspid regurgitation also increase in prevalence in racehorses and are more common in younger horses. These murmurs are usually holosystolic or pansystolic; plateau (band) shaped; grade 2/6 or louder; coarse or blowing in quality; with their point of maximal intensity at the right atrioventricular valve area radiating dorsally. Murmurs of tricuspid regurgitation are commonly ausculted in the horse's right second intercostal space.