1. Using a lateral thoracic radiograph, ensure the thoracic vertebrae T4 to T12 are clearly delineated.

2. Using calipers, measure the longest axis of the cardiac silhouette from the carina of the mainstem bronchus to the apex (designated “L”).

3. Transfer this long axis measurement to the vertebrae, starting at the cranial edge of T4, and count the number of vertebrae that fall within the caliper points.

4. Using calipers, measure the short axis at the widest part of the cardiac silhouette, perpendicular to the long axis measurement (designated “S”).

5. Transfer this short axis measurement to the vertebrae, starting at the cranial edge of T4, and count the number of vertebrae that fall within the caliper points.

6. Add the two measurements.  
   \[ \text{VHS} = \text{L} + \text{S} \]

   \[ \begin{align*} 
   \text{VHS} &= 5.2 + 4.4 \\
   &= 9.6 
   \end{align*} \]

**Vertebral Heart Score (VHS)**

This example:

- Long axis line: 5.2
- Short axis line: 4.4

VHS for normal dogs = 8.7–10.7

If you have IDEXX-PACS™ Imaging Software, the Vertebral Heart Score (VHS) tool lets you measure the heart size without calipers. Look for VHS in the annotation tools menu of your IDEXX-PACS Imaging Software.