

BRIDGEWATER VETERINARY HOSPITAL

CANCER IN PETS

Cancer can occur at any age, but is diagnosed much more frequently as pets age. Cancer is a leading cause of death in senior pets. Cancer can occur on the skin, or in any part of the body. Malignant cancers often spread to other locations in the body. Once they reach either the liver or lungs, they may quickly spread throughout the body.

There are no blood tests to determine the type of cancer. Diagnosis of the particular type of cancer depends upon microscopic examination of a tumor sample. A sample is often obtained by a “biopsy” or fine needle aspirate.

Many cancers can be cured by surgical removal. The smaller the lump and the sooner it is removed, the better the prognosis. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy are now readily available although somewhat expensive. Some types of cancer are much more readily treatable than others. To determine an accurate prognosis, treatment options, and expense, the tumor sample must be examined.

Signs of cancer to watch for:

1. Change of bowel or bladder habits. Diarrhea or constipation, straining to urinate or defecate, blood or mucous in the stool or urine, etc.
2. A skin wound that does not heal. Some skin cancers don't appear as a lump, but rather as raw, bleeding or scabby areas.
3. Unusual bleeding or discharges. Bleeding from the mouth, ears, or nose may indicate a tumor inside.
4. Drooling or difficulty swallowing. This is very common with mouth and throat tumors.
5. Changes in respiration. Nagging cough, hoarseness, tiring easily, rapid breathing, or excessive panting are signs of heart and/or lung disease. The cause of this disease may be cancer.
6. Abdominal distention. A mass in the abdomen may make the pet appear to be bloated or to have gained weight.
7. Unexplained weight loss.
8. Changes in behavior, temperament, activity level or habits.

CALL US IMMEDIATELY IF YOU SEE ANY OF THESE ABNORMALITIES IN YOUR PET.

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