



DCAH Newsletter

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My Pet Has a Lump. Is it Cancer?

That is a good question. A lump or mass can be many things including cancer. It can be a benign mass such as a lipoma (fatty tumor) or adenoma (wart-like growth), a cyst, a hematoma (blood filled pocket), an abscess (infection) or cancer.

If you find a mass at home, mark it with either nail polish or a marker on the hair (especially if it is a small mass) in order that it is easier to find during the exam. We also will want to know how long the mass has been present and if it has changed any since you first found it.

It is possible to obtain a large amount of information about a mass based on physical examination, but ultimately in order to determine whether we have a cancerous situation, we need to run a few tests. The first diagnostic test is called a *fine needle aspirate*. This is where a small gauge needle (same size that is used to give vaccinations) is inserted into the mass and a small amount of cells are withdrawn for evaluation under the microscope. It can be done on almost all masses that are either on the skin or under the skin. It is usually done without the need for sedation and has few side effects. The slide may be read in-house by our licensed veterinary technicians who are practiced in

this area or sent to our laboratory for a pathologist's evaluation.

If the fine needle aspirate indicates the presence of cancerous cells or is inconclusive (or if the mass is not accessible for a fine needle aspirate), the next diagnostic step is a *biopsy* of the mass. In this case your pet will be sedated and the lump removed. It will be sent to a laboratory for analysis. The veterinarian will help to determine the best course of action once the mass has been identified. Most malignant masses are usually best dealt with by excision as the first line of defense and many are cured by this method.

One common cancer, called a mast cell tumor, is notorious for having the appearance of almost any other lump and this is one important reason to have all lumps checked with a fine needle aspirate. Mast cell tumors should be removed surgically and biopsied. You cannot tell by feel or sight the difference from a mast cell tumor and any other type of tumor.

Most lumps, however, are benign and require no treatment. In fact, dogs often develop numerous lumps as they get older. But the safest approach is to have any lump evaluated. Early diagnosis and treatment of malignant masses provide the best prognosis for your pet. 🐾

Community News

Due to the considerable growth that our county has experienced in recent years, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) has established a local chapter in Prince William County. It was launched in the fall of 2004.

The SPCA is an all-volunteer animal welfare organization created to benefit the animals of greater Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park. It is dedicated to protecting domestic animals from cruelty, neglect, and abandonment, and stopping the unnecessary overpopulation of companion animals. It does not function as a shelter and does not rescue animals. Instead it carries out its mission by providing programs and activities designed to: 1) reduce the number of dogs and cats being born through its spay/neuter program, 2) facilitate the adoption of animals, and 3) enrich the human-animal bond.

The organization's approach is unique in that it encourages partnerships with the veterinary industry, the local business community, county government officials and other nonprofits. All funding comes from private donations. Our hospital will be part of the network of veterinarians that will work with this organization. For more detailed information, visit their website at www.pwspca.org. 🐾

Farewell to Kim Moses

Our senior veterinary technician, Kim Moses, will be leaving us this summer. She and her husband are moving back to Pennsylvania where her family currently resides. Kim has been one of the pillars of the hospital, technically competent, compassionate and caring. She will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best. 🐾

Have a Heart Fund and Other Community Projects

Our fund assisted nine kittens, a dog injured in a dog fight at the county shelter, a cat (Socks) spayed elsewhere that was still going through heat cycles, and a Himalayan cat with a blocked urethra.

In addition, Dr. Mayo contributed her time and some of our funds to assisting the Prince William County Shelter with the 27 dogs and five puppies seized by the county from the Black Wolf Rescue in Triangle. Its owner was charged with animal neglect. Dr. Mayo did initial exams on all the dogs, went back for follow-up visits as necessary, and administered rabies vaccines to all the dogs. She also testified in court for the county with a result of conviction on 29 counts of animal neglect.

The hospital is also working with the county Area Agency on Aging to provide emergency care for the pets of senior citizens who are ill or otherwise unable to care for their pets. The agency will determine whether a situation meets its criteria and then notify our hospital for assistance.

Contributors to our fund this quarter include: Robert Andrews, Peggy Bercher, Dave Cummings, Ann Kline, and Bob Palmer (in memory of Norm). 🐾



Pet Care Tips



Do you have a cat that likes to urinate over the top of its litter box but will not tolerate a covered litter box? Buy a deep Rubbermaid storage container (18 gallon size), then cut a U-shaped hole in the front for access and use it in place of your normal litter box.

Or if you need longer and wider litter boxes for larger cats (or multiple cats), use the black all purpose tubs used for mixing cement, dipping wall paper, etc. They can be found at most home improvement stores. Remember, whatever kind of box you use, scoop daily, clean weekly and replace every 6 months for the most devoted litter box use.

(If you have some helpful hints, send them to info@dalecityanimalhosp.com, our mailing address, or bring them to your next visit, and we will include them next time.) 🐾

Dangerous Foods for Pets

Many pet owners are aware that chocolate is dangerous for their pets. But there are a number of other seemingly harmless foods that can be dangerous as well. It has recently been documented that grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure. Onions (raw, powdered, or cooked) can cause anemia. Foods similar to onions, like garlic, leeks, chives, and shallots, may also cause anemia. Ingestion of rising bread dough can cause ethanol toxicity, abdominal pain, and bloating. Nicotine, found in tobacco products, is also dangerous for pets. If your pet ingests any of these products, contact our office immediately for guidance. 🐾

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