

VET INFORMATION SHEET

TREATABLE CANCERS

Some vets have asked “What tumours in pets can be treated?” So this month we focus on a short list of cancer cases we believe can be treated to attain long term remission (even “cure”) or at least an extended period of good quality time.

Mast cell tumours (MCT)

Histological grade and stage dependent. Dogs with low grade MCT can be cured with wide surgical resection. Chemotherapy may be useful for some forms. Cats often have low-grade disease and are often easily managed with surgery. There are visceral forms and the splenic form can respond well to splenectomy in the cat.

Mammary Gland Tumours (MGT)

Fifty percent of dogs with MGT have benign forms and are cured with surgery. Fifty percent of dogs with malignant histologies are cured with surgery. Therefore we cure about 75% of dogs with MGT with surgery alone. Bilateral mastectomy is not required for every case and prognostic indicators include grade, node status (stage), growth rate, invasiveness and size of the primary. Spaying before the first heat is protective and spaying after 2.5 years of age confers no protection. Feline MGT is usually malignant and treatment involves bilateral mastectomy often with doxorubicin chemotherapy. Prognosis depends on stage particularly tumour volume.

Oral Tumours

Common oral tumours include malignant melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), fibrosarcoma and acanthomatous epulis. Some dogs are cured with mandibulectomy or maxillectomy and this depends on histology, location, size and stage. Cosmetic results are good to excellent and function is excellent. The most common oral cancer in the cat is SCC. This does not respond to therapy as well as in dogs however there are other feline oral tumours that can be cured. Our new accelerated radiation protocol however is showing encouraging early results for this devastating feline cancer.

Perianal Tumours

Adenomas are very common and can be cured. Usually occur in intact male dogs and castration is necessary. Carcinomas can be cured especially if small. Apocrine gland carcinomas can be controlled for prolonged periods with local excision, lymphadenectomy and chemotherapy and also with radiation therapy. Hypercalcaemia is often a complicating problem making urgent treatment necessary.

Nasal Planum Cancer

Nasal planectomy is often curative and cosmetic results are good to excellent. Function is not affected and quality of life is maintained. For very advanced disease we have some amazing results with radiation.

Lung cancer

Pulmonary lobectomy can result in 50% one-year control rates and prognosis is node dependent. Mortality and morbidity with treatment are low and recovery is rapid.

Bone Cancer

Combination of surgery (amputation or limb sparing) and chemotherapy results in about 50% one-year survival rates for osteosarcoma. Survival of cats with this disease is better than 2 years on average without chemotherapy. Quality of life is excellent. Dogs with bone tumours on ribs, skull and mandible can also be helped and often cured depending on histology and stage.

Haemangiosarcoma

Doxorubicin may extend the disease free interval and prolong survival but the data for this is a bit controversial in the literature. We are planning a large international trial to better define the role of chemotherapy. Cutaneous forms can be cured with surgery.

Other Solid Tumours

We have successfully treated and managed dogs and cats with a variety of other tumours including: thyroid carcinoma, adrenal carcinoma, insulinoma, multilobular osteochondrosarcoma, meningioma (brain and spinal chord – also now we can treat many brain tumours very effectively with radiation), bladder cancer, reproductive tract tumour, myeloma, thymoma, salivary gland cancer, liver tumour, intestinal tumour, synovial cell sarcoma and splenic tumour.

Lymphosarcoma (LSA)

Overall our complete remission rate is about 90% with chemotherapy and duration of remission is about 12 months on average with about 20% of cases enjoying long term remission well beyond the median.

Cancer is a word not a sentence.

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