

Mast Cell Tumours

Mast cells are commonly found throughout the body, for example in skin tissue and organs. They contain histamine which is important for signalling the creation of inflammation in response to injury or allergy. When these cells become malignant, they can accumulate to form a cancerous mass.

Clinical signs:

Mast cell tumours do not always present in the same way, some are small and unassuming, others are large, appear inflamed/raw and can be sore to the touch. Due to the inflammatory nature of the mass, the size of it can fluctuate rapidly, so a small lump which has been observe for some time may unexpectedly grow and become uncomfortable for the patient. We recommend checking any lumps which you are concerned about or that have experience unexpected changes.



Diagnosis:

Using a HT Vista scanning machine, we can learn if the lump shows a high percentage likelihood of needing further investigation. Based on the readings it creates by applying heat to the area and reading how the tissue responds, it compares the information gained to its extensive database to indicate whether our vets would recommend taking a sample of the lump to analyse.

Samples of the suspected mast cell tumour will be evaluated either inhouse or by being sent to a laboratory for further analysis. These samples are obtained from Fine Needle Aspirates (FNA's), Biopsy or removal of the mass. At this point the mass may be graded for its malignancy so that an informed decision can be made about further treatment options.

X-rays may be performed to further assess whether the cancer has spread to other areas of the body. Unfortunately, one area which is more likely to be affected is the lungs, due to the high blood flow to the tissues or the lymphatic system

In some cases, more advanced imaging may be performed to better evaluate other soft tissue structures for signs it has spread such as CT or MRI.

Treatment -

○ Surgical removal is the most common form of treatment, the utmost effort is taken to attempt to remove the entire structure. We recommend this variety of mass is sent away to the laboratory to confirm we have clear margins, a percentage of tissue surrounding the mass which is free of cancerous cells. This would indicate the treatment was curative, if metastasis is not present.

○ Some cases are advised that the patient is referred for further radio or chemotherapy treatment.



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