

dogs and cancer | part 1

Cancer: the diagnosis is paralyzing. In this issue we begin our series on Dogs and Cancer. Upcoming issues will cover the information and resources you may need to arm yourself to understand and fight this disease.

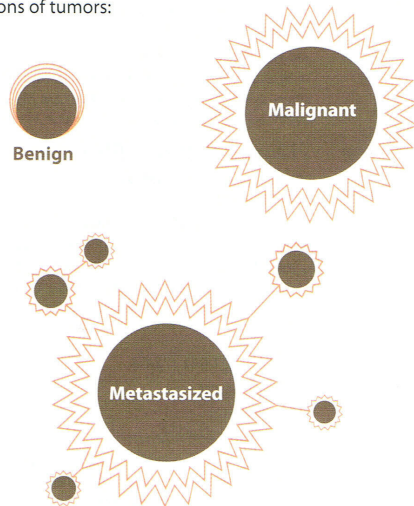
Cancer Glossary

By Roxanne Hawn

When your dog gets diagnosed with cancer, it can feel like the veterinarians speak a foreign language. Admit it. The first thing you think is “My dog is going to die.” Cancer is indeed the leading cause of death in older dogs. But, it’s more treatable than congestive heart failure, renal failure and diabetes, which are also quite common. So, once you get past the shock of the diagnosis, here’s a little vocabulary help.

All Cancers Not Created Equal

Cancer is the unrestrained growth of cells that destroy normal tissues and body parts. Here is a look at the different classifications of tumors:



Benign = slow growing, non-spreading tumor

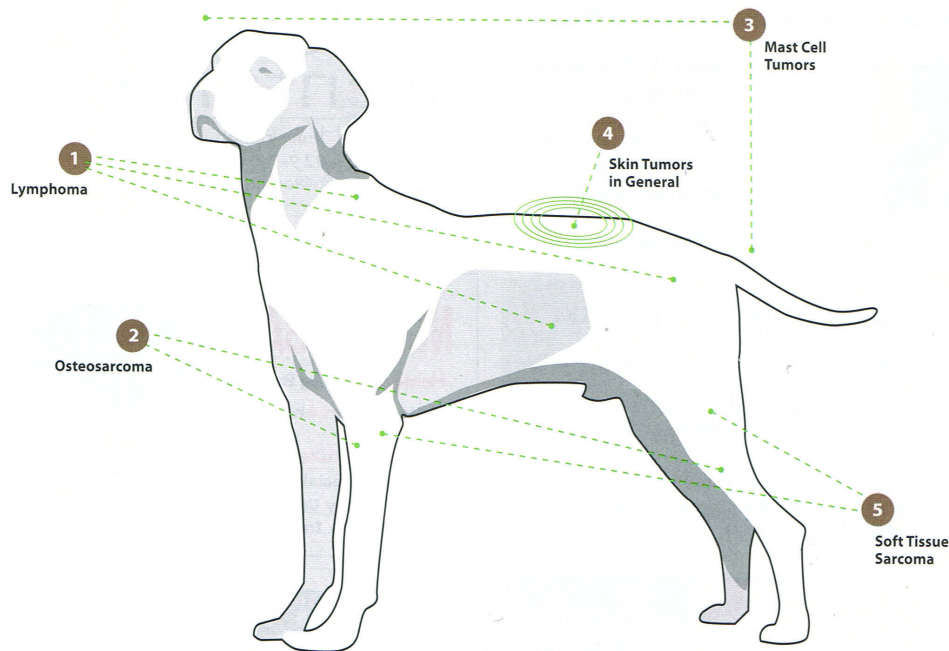
Malignant = usually invasive tumor, capable of spreading to other areas of the body

Metastasized = cancer spread from original site

rocky mountain dog | march + april 2008

“In veterinary oncology, we use the words ‘cancer’ and ‘tumor’ pretty much interchangeably. So in our world, having a cancer or a tumor on a dog means that it could be either benign (slow growing, not spreading) or malignant (grows fast, can spread to other sites in the body). Even in people (and in dogs) it is true that benign tumors can be fatal because they can get really big over a long period of time ... To us, a benign tumor is still considered as having a cancer, but the prognosis is a whole lot different than if the tumor is malignant.”

*Barbara Biller, DVM, PhD, Diplomate ACVIM (Oncology)
Assistant Professor of Oncology, Colorado State University,
Animal Cancer Center & Veterinary Teaching Hospital*



5 Most Common Dog Cancers

- 1. Lymphoma**
A cancer that begins in the cells immune system, usually involves lymph nodes, spleen and liver
- 2. Osteosarcoma**
A form of bone cancer, most commonly seen in the long bones of the legs
- 3. Mast Cell Tumors**
A common skin tumor that can occur anywhere on the body
- 4. Skin Tumors in General**
A variety of cancers that begin in the skin
- 5. Soft Tissue Sarcoma**
Cancers of the muscle and connective tissue, usually found on limbs, but can grow anywhere on the body

Treatment Words

Antineoplastic Agent

A drug that hinders, destroys or stunts growth and spread of cancer cells (chemotherapy)

Chemotherapy

Treatment via drugs with antineoplastic properties

Excision

Surgical removal of a tumor or growth

Grade

Assessment of a tumor's severity based on microscopic evaluation

Immunotherapy

Stimulation of the immune system to treat or fight cancer by preventing cancer cells from "hiding" from the body's defenses. For example, vaccines that target cancer cells

Palliative Care

Treatment aimed at the relief of pain and symptoms but not intended to cure the disease.

Prognosis

Projected outcome, life expectancy

Protocol

Cancer treatment plan

Radiation Therapy

X-ray or electron treatment that damages or kills cancer cells so that they cannot reproduce

Stage

Measurement scale that indicates the cancer's location and current spread

To look up more words, check out CSU's Animal Cancer Center (www.csuanimalcancercenter.org) or the National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov).