



What is it?

Nasal tumors are usually locally aggressive, malignant tumors that affect both dogs and cats. The most common tumor originating in the nasal cavity in dogs is adenocarcinoma, while lymphoma is the most common nasal tumor in cats. Animals usually present to their veterinarian for difficulty breathing through the nose, noisy breathing, mucoid/bloody nasal discharge, sneezing, or facial swelling. Nasal tumors are slow to metastasize (spread) but when they do it is generally to local lymph nodes or to the lungs. They are generally locally invasive tumors that eat away at surrounding bone and tissue and obstruct the nasal passage. The tumor type and severity are commonly diagnosed by skull radiographs (x-rays), rhinoscopy, CT and tumor biopsy.

How is it treated?

Surgery is a palliative option but it is usually not performed unless the tumor is small and located in the most rostral part of the nasal cavity, away from vital organs such as the eyes and the brain. Radiation therapy is the most favorable option for combating this type of cancer in dogs and cats. Chemotherapy is also an option, especially for nasal lymphoma in cats. Piroxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug that can be given to provide pain relief and possibly increase survival time over no treatment at all.

What is the prognosis for nasal tumors?

As with any disease, prognosis is dependent on the severity of the disease and the treatment chosen. Surgery alone holds a 3-6 month median survival time. If left untreated or as the disease progresses, nasal tumors may completely obstruct the nasal cavity, making it impossible for your animal to breathe normally through its nose. Once at this stage, it is likely that there may be invasion of the tumor into the brain, leading to neurological disorders. A personalized treatment plan is important to slow the progression of nasal tumors. Talk to your veterinarian regarding the best protocol for your animal companion.

What symptoms can present as the disease progresses?

Early Stages:

- Nasal discharge
- Sneezing/blood
- Noisy breathing
- Exercise intolerance
- Facial swelling
- Decreased appetite
- Mild weight loss

Late Stages:

- Persistent early stages
- Profuse nasal bleeding
- Anemia
- Facial deformity and pain
- Open mouth breathing
- Continuous panting – dogs
- Anorexia
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea – often black and tarry
- Vision loss, abnormal eye position
- Dull mentation
- Seizures – if the tumor reaches the brain

Crisis – Immediate veterinary assistance needed regardless of disease

- Difficulty breathing
- Prolonged seizures
- Uncontrollable vomiting/diarrhea
- Sudden collapse
- Profuse bleeding – internal or external
- Crying/whining from pain*

**It should be noted that most animals will instinctually hide their pain. Vocalization of any sort that is out of the ordinary for your pet may indicate that their pain and anxiety has become too much for them to bear. If your pet vocalizes due to pain or anxiety, please consult with your tending veterinarian immediately.*

Common Signs of Pain

Panting, lameness, difficulty sleeping, pacing, abnormal posture, body tensing, poor grooming habits, tucked tail, dilated pupils, licking sore spot, muscle atrophy, decreased appetite, vocalizing/yowling, reclusive behavior, aggressive behavior, avoiding stairs/jumping, depressed, unable to stand.