

PRIMARY LUNG TUMORS

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What is it?

Primary lung tumors are tumors that originate in the lung tissue and infrequently spread to other sites of the body such as lung lobes, pleura (lining of the chest cavity) bones and brain. Primary lung tumors are relatively uncommon, making up only about 1% of diagnosed tumors. It is much more common to see lung tumors that have originated from a cancer in another region of the body. Most animals with lung tumors present to their veterinarian for respiratory signs such as coughing, difficult breathing and exercise intolerance. Diagnosis is generally based on chest x-rays, needle aspirate of lung nodules also.

How is it treated?

For single lung nodules with no sign of spread anywhere else, surgical excision is generally recommended. For very large tumors or tumors that have invaded or spread to other areas, chemotherapy is recommended, in addition to surgical excision of the primary mass.

What is the prognosis for a lung tumor?

Pets with small, less aggressive tumors without lymph node involvement have an average survival time of around 16 months with surgery alone. Pets with more aggressive tumors, including lymph node involvement, have an average survival time of 2 months. Because many patients will ultimately develop metastatic disease following surgery, chemotherapy is commonly recommended. However, it is unknown whether the use of chemotherapy following surgery significantly improves survival over surgery alone. Tumors that are not surgically excisable or that have metastasized to other areas of the body will eventually progress affecting the animal's ability to breathe. A personalized treatment plan is important to slow the progression of lung cancer. Talk to your veterinarian regarding the best treatment protocol for your pet.

What symptoms can present as the disease progresses?

Early stages:

- Weight loss
- Coughing
- Exercise intolerance

Late stages:

- Persistent early stages
- Hacking and bloody mucus
- Difficulty breathing
- Anorexia
- Vomiting
- Reclusive behavior
- Unable to rise
- Visible distention of the chest

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.