



Lymphoma in Dogs

Lymphoma is a malignant cancer of the lymphatic system. Lymph is a fluid that contains white blood cells that fight infection. The lymph also transports fat around the body, helps to maintain the proper amount of fluid within cells, and picks up bacteria and viruses along with metabolic waste products and tissue debris. The lymph flows throughout the body in vessels similar to blood vessels and eventually drains back into the blood.

The lymph also goes to lymph nodes where the white blood cells will work to kill bacteria or viruses that the lymph picks up. This is why your lymph nodes (“glands”) swell up when you are sick. Lymph nodes are located on the neck, in front of the shoulder, in the “armpit”, in the groin, and behind the knees on the surface of the body. There are also ones within the chest and abdomen.



The spleen and thymus are part of the lymphatic system. There is also lymphoid tissue within the gastrointestinal (GI – stomach and intestines) tract as well. All of these are important parts of our immune system.

Types

Lymphoma is one of the most common cancers in dogs. It can affect all of the lymphatic system throughout the body. It is called multicentric when it affects the lymph nodes both on the surface and within the body, mediastinal when it is in the chest cavity, alimentary when it affects the GI tract, and extranodal when it involves the skin, kidneys, or central nervous system.

Multicentric is the most common type in dogs

Signs & Testing

Signs will vary depending on the tissues involved. The usual early sign for dogs is an enlargement of lymph nodes. They are not painful and they can grow rapidly.



As other areas are involved, they may show signs of weight loss, poor appetite, and lethargy. If it is in the chest, the dog may have difficulty breathing. The GI type can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.



The liver or spleen may be enlarged and the intestines thickened.

It can affect the skin causing redness or flakiness, ulcers (deep sores) especially around the lips and pads of the feet, itchiness, or lumps in the skin.

The dog could drink and urinate more due to kidney failure, become blind or have seizures.

Biopsies of the enlarged lymph nodes or other organs involved will diagnose lymphoma. Blood tests and x-rays or ultrasound will help to determine the extent of the problem.

Treatment

The primary treatment for lymphoma is chemotherapy. Surgery or radiation may be options in certain cases.

Survival time with treatment is generally 6-12 months on average, depending on the type of lymphoma the dog has and the organs involved.

We can recommend some herbs and supplements that can be helpful for cancer patients whether you use conventional therapies or not. They work on improving the immune system so the body can control the cancer on its own. Some dogs have responded incredibly well to them.

Summary

Early detection may improve your dog's survival rate. Have your dog examined immediately if you notice lumps especially in the areas of lymph nodes. Don't wait to see if it grows or "goes away" on its own. Dogs should be examined twice a year once they get to be 7-8 years old. This, along with routine blood and urine tests, will help to look for any problems.