

# LYMPHOMA

Lymphoma is a variety of cancers that are made up of lymphocyte cells. These particular cells make up the lymph nodes and circulate in the blood, forming part of the immune system. This means that they are in many locations around the body and therefore lymphoma can cause many different signs in pets. The most common first sign is enlarged lymph nodes that feel like firm lumps, especially on the neck or just under the jaw. Other signs include coughing, vomiting, diarrhoea, anorexia, drooling and weight loss. More specific signs can be seen depending on the location of the cancer cells.

Lymphoma, also known as lymphosarcoma, can affect any dog or cat but is mostly found in middle aged to older pets.

If lymphoma is suspected the first step is often a fine needle aspirate of a lymph node. A sedation is often needed for this procedure as the pet must stay very still. A needle is put into the lymph nodes to get a sample of them. This is then put onto a slide and looked at under the microscope where we can assess what the cells look like. From here we can start planning treatment options.

Treatment consists of either referral for chemotherapy or steroid based treatment. Before referral, blood tests and biopsies will be required. With these results, the specialist will be able to fully assess your pet and formulate the best options for treatment specifically for you and your pet. Usually these treatment plans will have multiple components with different drugs given at different times. These will vary depending on the stage of the cancer too. It is important to note that although there are side effects to chemotherapy in pets, these are far fewer and much less severe than they are in humans.

Steroidal treatment is not as effective as chemotherapy, however it is still a viable option and is a part of some chemotherapy protocols. Its aim is to suppress tumour growth.

None of these measures are a cure, we aim to provide increased quality of life for as long as possible and each case is managed individually. Survival times are however poor, 1-2 months for animals given steroids alone and usually less than 1 year with chemotherapy.

Whichever treatment you choose for your pet, it is important to keep in regular contact with your vet as sometimes medications need to be changed or there is something more we can do.