

Valley Oak SPCA

Did you know that dogs and cats get breast cancer too? Breast cancer is the most common tumor in female dogs and the third most common tumor in female cats. In addition to preventing unwanted litters of puppies and kittens; you can reduce your pet's chance of getting certain types of cancer by having them spayed and neutered.

How do I check my pet for breast cancer?

In addition to a routine veterinary visit once or twice yearly, veterinarians recommend a monthly "whole body check" - from the tip of the nose to the tail and out to the ends of the toes! In addition to looking at your pet's eyes, ears, mouth, skin, and hair...make sure you get a good feel as well! Run your hands along their head, neck, back, sides, down the legs and under the belly to check for any lumps, masses, swellings or sore spots. While humans have only two breasts and there is no trick to finding them, dogs and cats have multiple mammary glands and they are found in two straight lines extending from the left and right armpit, down the chest and into the groin area.

What if I find a lump?

If you feel a lump, contact your veterinarian immediately. Breast tumors have an 80-90% chance of being malignant in cats and 50% chance of being malignant in dogs. Don't wait to see if the lump grows or changes from month to month....get it looked at right away. It is always best to detect and deal with breast cancer early for the best outcome.

How Can Cancer Be Prevented?

In addition to preventing unwanted litters of puppies and kittens; you can dramatically reduce your pet's chance of getting certain types of cancer by having him or her altered at a young age. Breast cancer can be avoided almost completely by having your dog or cat spayed before her first heat cycle. Neutered male dogs and cats have zero chance of developing testicular cancer.

Go Natural!

Choose a natural pet food that avoids the use of preservatives, artificial colors or other synthetic chemicals. Although there is no proven link to canine or feline breast cancer specifically, many synthetic chemicals have been linked to human reproductive and other health problems.

Stay lean and fit!

Fat doesn't increase the risk of breast cancer per se, but extra pounds can certainly hide a lump. Keeping your pet at a healthy weight will help you detect not only breast lumps, but any unusual swelling or abnormality on your pet's body. Wellness exams and early detection are key to successful outcomes with most cancers or other medical conditions.

Which Dogs Are Prone to Cancer?

Older dogs are much more likely to develop cancer than younger ones, and certain breeds are prone to specific kinds of cancers. Boxers, Boston Terriers and Golden Retrievers are among the breeds that most commonly develop mast cell tumors. Large and giant breeds, like Great Danes and Saint Bernards, are much more likely to suffer from bone cancer than smaller breeds. It is important to be familiar with the diseases to which your dog might have a breed predisposition.

Which Cats Are Prone to Cancer?

Though cancer can be diagnosed in cats of all ages and breeds, it is much more common in older cats. Certain breeds are prone to specific cancers, but cats with white ears and heads are particularly susceptible to skin cancer. Keeping your cat indoors will protect her from certain skin cancers caused by repeated sun exposure and sunburn. Ask your vet if your cat falls into specific at-risk categories.

Lymphosarcoma, a highly malignant cancer of the lymph system and the most common type of cancer in cats, can be caused by the feline leukemia virus (FeLV). FeLV is a transmittable retrovirus that can be passed in utero as well as through saliva and direct contact. Primarily a disease of younger cats, the virus doesn't always manifest symptoms, so it is important to have your cat tested regularly to prevent transmission and progression. There is a vaccine available for FeLV that your veterinarian can discuss with you based on your cat's lifestyle and risk of exposure to FeLV.

Help Valley Oak SPCA educate our community by encouraging your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors to be responsible pet owners: spay and neuter your pets and help save lives