

Orthopaedics
Oncology

Medicine
Dermatology

Soft tissue surgery
Specialist Imaging

Cardiology
Anaesthesia

Neurology
Physiotherapy

Cancer surgery in dogs and cats

'Cancer' is a generic term that is used to describe any type of abnormal growth or multiplication of body cells that should normally grow in a controlled manner. This means that the appropriate treatment for a cancer depends on the type of cancer and until a firm diagnosis is achieved, the best treatment cannot be confirmed by the oncologist. This can be achieved either via fine needle aspiration biopsy where some cells are collected through small needle and usually this does not require sedation or anaesthetic. Some cancers don't exfoliate very well and in order to obtain a diagnosis, a piece of the cancerous tissue needs to be collected for which usually short anaesthetic is required. Once the diagnosis is confirmed, then we will know whether surgery is the best option. At this stage, your pet will be examined by a Soft Tissue surgeon to evaluate both the likelihood of achieving a cure as well as the potential complications associated with the surgery. Sometimes this is a difficult balance and we will discuss with you the pros and cons of the planned surgery and whether there are other options such as a more minor surgery followed by chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

An important part of decision making in cancer surgery is knowing whether the cancer has spread to any other part of the body (usually the local lymph nodes or 'glands', the lungs, liver, spleen) and we perform tests to check for this. This is done via imaging such as radiographs, ultrasound or advanced techniques which also allow us to assess cancer's invasion into surrounding tissue allowing better planning of the surgical excision. If the cancer has spread to multiple organs then it may be that we decide together with the owner, that surgery is not appropriate as it will not make any difference to the long term outcome. However sometimes the primary (main) tumour is painful and even though there is spread to other organs, surgery may be recommended in order to alleviate suffering and improve quality of life. In some circumstances, we perform surgery to remove as much of the tumour as possible and then expect to carry out other treatments after the surgery to delay recurrence of the tumour. For some cancers (eg soft tissue sarcoma, mast cell tumour), surgery is always the best option for a cure and major surgery, even if there are potential complications, is the best form of treatment because with a big enough surgery, the tumour is unlikely to grow again.

Soft Tissue surgeons perform all sorts of surgeries in different parts of the body. This means we acquire skills in tissue handling and experience in reconstruction that are useful for all sorts of different types of cancer. All cancer cases that come to the surgery team will have a balanced and logical approach to plan what type of surgery is appropriate and what the aim of the surgery is. We always discuss cancer cases as a team of specialists in radiology, anaesthesia and oncology to achieve the best plan of treatment. This is also discussed with the owner in depth allowing them to make an informed decision on their pet's care. It is also important to understand that we will never push an owner to make a decision, or to feel that they have to choose surgery. It is all about communication and talking about what is best for both you and your pet.

Extraordinary People
Exceptional Care

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