

Mammary tumours in dog T N Carr

Introduction

Bitches have ten teats (on average), five down each side.

Mammary tumours are growths associated with the tissue of the mammary gland. The equivalent in people would be breast cancer.

Mammary tumours are not always cancerous, but often the only way to differentiate is to remove the diseased tissue and have it analysed. This analysis is called histopathology.

My bitch has a lump by one of her teats. What is it?

The age of the bitch and the feel of the lump will give the examining vet some idea of what the lump is. Lumps associated with the mammary tissue may be mastitis (an infection), cysts, and sometimes mammary tumours.

When the lump appears can be significant as often mammary tumours seem to grow just after a bitch's season. This is because they are often sensitive to a hormone called progesterone. If you detect a lump by the teat of your dog you should seek attention from your vet, the longer they are left the worse the prognosis.

My vet has said an operation is necessary. What happens next?

We will usually recommend initially a blood test to ensure your pet is safe to give an anaesthetic to.

Then preoperatively we would recommend a chest x-ray to look for any signs of spread of the tumour. Mammary tumours are sometimes quite aggressive and spread into the lungs (metastasis).

As long as everything is ok, surgery will then go ahead.

Often it is necessary to stitch in a penrose drain at the end of the operation to allow drainage of fluid from the wound. Your surgeon and nurses will explain any aftercare necessary when you collect your pet. Sometimes if the drainage is excessive we may on occasion suggest keeping your bitch in at the clinic over night on the day of the operation.

Portions of the tissue removed is sent on your agreement for analysis and the results are usually back with us in about five days.

I have heard it is recommended to spey a bitch at the same time.

Depending on the age of the bitch at surgery ,generally it is considered beneficial to spey because this removes the hormone surges that can accelerate mammary tumours.This is something you need to discuss on an individual basis with your vet.