



ANIMAL ANTICS

Note for Pet Owners:

Pet Patrol 365 provides this information for educational purposes only. You should seek the advice of your veterinarian if your pet is ill, as only they can correctly advise on the diagnosis and the recommended treatment for your pet.

LUMPS & BUMPS: NEED WE WORRY?



Lumps and bumps on or under the skin are a common finding in pet animals, especially older pets. Often we fear that these lumps occur because the pet has cancer. However, not all lumps are cancerous, and even some types of cancer can be benign or relatively harmless.

So what should you do if you notice a lump or bump on your pet? The most important piece of advice is to never make any assumptions. Even if your pet is older, a lump does not automatically mean that the diagnosis is 'cancer'; on the other hand, just because your pet is young, it does not mean that the lump is harmless.

It is important that you take your pet to your veterinarian as soon as practical to have any lump checked out. You should be prepared to answer questions about when you first noticed the lump, whether your pet is feeling and behaving normally, whether the lump seems to be bothersome (i.e. have you noticed your pet frequently licking or chewing at it), does it seem painful when touched, et cetera.

Once your veterinarian has conducted a physical examination of your pet and has considered several specific factors, he or she will make some recommendations to you. Factors that will be important in making these recommendations include your pet's age, breed and overall health status, the location and size of the mass, the appearance of the area surrounding the mass, how firmly it is attached to the tissues beneath it, whether it developed suddenly, and whether there is any history of recent trauma. In the majority of cases, your veterinarian will recommend performing a biopsy of some sort. There are several types of biopsies, including fine-needle aspiration biopsies (a fine needle is inserted into the lump and a sample of fluid and/or cells is withdrawn for analysis), incision biopsies (a sample of the lump is removed via an incision), or excision biopsies (where the entire mass is removed). The choice of which biopsy to perform depends on the individual circumstances. Your veterinarian will advise you on the best option for your pet.

Unless the diagnosis is very obvious, the biopsy sample will be sent to a veterinary laboratory so that the nature of the lump can be evaluated microscopically. That way, you will know whether or not the lump is something that is benign or malignant and what treatment options are available.

No matter whether your pet is a cat, a dog, a rabbit, a parrot, an iguana, a ferret, a hamster, or a more unusual or exotic critter, you should know what is 'normal' and watch for anything out of the ordinary. That way, you can help keep your friend healthy so that he or she can continue to lead a comfortable life.

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