



Southern Counties

VETERINARY
SPECIALISTS

Mast cell tumour

Information Sheet

**Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists
Specialist Referral Service**



What is Mast Cell tumour?

Mast-cell tumour is a common tumour in dogs but relatively rare in cat. This tumour affects cells that help to regulate immune response (allergy). These cells are called Mast-cells and they are most commonly found in the skin. Mast-cells can be found also in other parts of the body but in a lower number.

What are the signs of Mast Cell tumour?

The vast of the majority of dogs with a mast-cell tumour are presented with one or more lumps on the skin. The appearance of the lump is quite variable from a small dome-shaped lump to a large mass. The rate of the growth of this tumour is very variable; some mast cell tumours can be of the same size for months others can growth very quickly over few days.

How is Mast Cell tumour investigated by the veterinary surgeon?

The diagnosis is usually easy with a quick

biopsy (fine needle aspirate) of the lump. The procedure is very effective and safe. Mast-cell tumour can behave in a very different ways. In some cases the tumour growth slowly just in the skin (low grade) in other cases mast-cell tumour can spread quickly from the skin to the lymph node (high grade) and then to other organs such as spleen and liver. For this reason, it is important before removing surgically a mast-cell tumour from the skin to make sure there is no spread to the local lymph nodes or to liver and spleen.

What treatment options are available?

Surgery is the main important to tool to treat mast-cell tumours. A good number of patients can be successfully cured with surgery alone. In some cases mast-cells cannot be removed completely because too big or because of their location (limbs). In these situations radiation therapy can be used to help the treatment. In patients in which the mast-cell tumour is aggressive (high grade) or with sign of spreading, chemotherapy can be used to help the treatment.



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