



Village Veterinary Practice Newsletter



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Lumps and Bumps on Your Pet: What Could They Be?

If you have an aging pet, you may periodically find some kind of lump or bump on its skin, or maybe even deeper. If you're like me, your mind probably jumps first to the thought--is it cancer?

According to Dr. Laura Garrett, veterinary oncologist at the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana, dogs and cats get cancer at the same rate that people do. But, she says, finding a lump or bump doesn't automatically mean something malignant or fatal.

A lump that you may find on your pet could be one of several things: an infection, such as an abscess from a dog or cat bite; inflammation, like a small, localized reaction to a vaccine or a bug bite; or a tumor, meaning an abnormal growth of cells, which could be either benign (harmless) or malignant (invasive and potentially harmful to your pet's health). The best way to determine the origin of the lump, and the best thing for your pet's health, would be to have it examined by your veterinarian.

Typically, a veterinarian will measure the lump and then take a fine-needle aspirate. This is a process in which a small needle is used to take a sample of the cells in the lump. The veterinarian will then view the cells under a microscope to get an initial idea of what is causing this mass (another word for "tumor"). In most cases, the sample is then sent off to a lab of experts, like those at the University of Illinois Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, for a final evaluation.

"No doctor can determine if a mass is 'safe' just by looking at the lump itself or by feeling it," Dr. Garrett says. That means that neither you nor your veterinarian can be certain that a mass is harmless without getting a microscopic look at the cells within via a fine needle aspirate or a biopsy.

If you do find a mass on your pet, you should be prepared to answer a few questions for your veterinarian: Have any changes occurred since you first noticed the mass? Does the mass seem to bother your pet? Has it been oozing any fluid or blood? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, it might be a cause of increased concern, but answering "no" does not eliminate the possibility that the lump is a health risk.

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Hours

M—Th: 7:45am—5:30pm
Friday: 7:45am—5:00pm
Call for Saturdays
House Calls Available

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Lumps and Bumps on Your Pet: What Could They Be?

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Fortunately for middle-aged to older dogs, the most common lump they get is a lipoma--a benign, fatty growth. Most lipomas never become a problem, and also have nothing to do with the weight of the animal. Dr. Garrett recommends, "Lipomas usually need to be removed only if they are in a spot that bothers the pet or the owner or if the lump begins to change quickly."

If the lump is not a lipoma, your veterinarian will try to determine what type of tumor is. If this can't be done at your clinic, a cell sample or larger biopsy may need to be sent to a specialty diagnostic lab for examination.

If a tumor is malignant, your veterinarian will determine whether it has spread to other parts of the body by taking a fine-needle aspirate of lymph nodes, taking chest X-rays, or sometimes doing an ultrasound of the animal's abdomen. A specialty oncologist such as Dr. Garrett has the knowledge of what tumors commonly spread, where they spread to, and how to treat them.

Your veterinarian may refer you to a specialist if testing or treatment can't be done at your regular clinic.

Treatment for malignant tumors depends on what type of cancer it is, but the range of options is very similar to what is available for human cancer patients. If the location of the tumor permits, surgery may be performed to remove it. Other tumors may be treated with various forms of chemotherapy. Luckily, dogs and cats usually tolerate chemotherapy much better than people.

"About 20 percent of pets have mild gastrointestinal upset, such as vomiting, diarrhea, or decreased appetite. A similar percent of pets may have low white blood cell counts that can predispose to infections, but a count so low that it can be life-threatening happens less than 3 percent of the time. Hair loss may be seen in dogs whose hair coats grow continuously (like poodles), but most dog breeds do not experience hair loss. Cats may lose their whiskers and guard hairs, making their coats more of a fluffy texture," Dr. Garrett says.

Many cancers in cats and dogs can be cured if caught early and treated appropriately, according to Dr. Garrett. Getting new lumps and bumps examined by your veterinarian may prevent a disease from becoming more severe. Be sure to check with your local veterinarian if you have questions or concerns about your pet's lumps and bumps.

Julia Disney, Information Specialist
University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

Grapes: Not a Healthy Choice for Your Dog

As you head to the kitchen for a healthy little snack, your four legged canine companion is probably following right behind you. So when you look down at your friend and see those sad eyes begging for a taste, you remember that you are eating a healthy snack, so what's the harm? Many of us show love for our pets through food, and healthy treats such as fruits and vegetables are usually OK, in moderation of course. That is unless the fruit is a grape, or its dehydrated counterpart, the raisin.

Grapes and raisins have been shown to cause acute renal (kidney) failure in dogs. Unfortunately, it has not yet been determined what the toxic component is in these fruits, but we do know that there is potential for a kidney crisis to occur. Additionally, very small amount of grape and raisin ingestion can have serious consequences. For this reason, it is recommended not to feed your dog any grapes or raisins.

If your dog should ingest any amount of these fruits, we strongly advise you to call our offices immediately. Based upon when the dog ate the fruit, how much was eaten, and how big the dog is will determine course of action.

If your VVP veterinarian has determined the amount of grapes ingested is cause for concern, you will need to come to the office as soon as possible.

If the incident has happened recently, usually within the past two hours, vomiting will be induced to remove the contents from the stomach. Hopefully this can be done before too much of the fruit's toxic component has a chance to be absorbed into the body. Blood and urine will also be taken to evaluate baseline kidney function.

Depending on the severity of the situation, dogs may need to be hospitalized and receive intravenous fluids to support the kidneys. The patient's blood and urine will be taken at various times throughout the pet's treatment to monitor kidney function.

So, the next time you want to give your dog a healthy treat, try an apple or carrot and avoid the grape and raisin. But, if your pet should happen to steal some of this fruit, please call our offices or poison control so that the proper course of action can be taken.



As Halloween lurks around the corner, VVP has a few helpful tips to your pets safe this spooky season.



Halloween candy and trick-or-treat bags should be kept out of every pet's reach! Chocolate and candy containing xylitol can be toxic to pets, and other tasty human treats can cause serious gastrointestinal upset. If your pet should consume any Halloween treats, please call our offices immediately or call the ASPCA Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.

The sound of the doorbell—exciting for some pets and scary for others. Regardless of how your pet feels about the doorbell and visitors, keep your pets far away when tending to trick-or-treaters to prevent your pets from running out the door.

Jack-o-lanterns are great to look at when all lit up in the dark, but consider using battery operated candles instead of traditional ones. Curious pets have the potential to burn themselves or start a fire!

Happy Halloween!



JOSIE



Flea FACT

A female flea can lay 50 eggs every day, and as many as 2,000 eggs in her two- to three-month life-time!

Though the weather is getting colder, fleas are still out and about, so make sure your pet is on monthly flea prevention!



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The Village Veterinary Practice Vision

Village Veterinary Practice was founded with the belief that companion animals deserve the best quality of life possible. Our vision is inspired by our patients, the devotion of their human families and the commitment of our veterinarians. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a strong tradition of providing unsurpassed veterinary care for companion animals.

The Village Veterinary Practice Mission

Village Veterinary Practice was established to care for your pet as a family member. By utilizing the latest medical advances, sound guidance and desire, we strive to make the family pet bond an enjoyable, healthy and life enriching experience.

Pet Pictures can be emailed to emeccia@villageveterinary.com and may be featured in our newsletters and website.