

ASK THE VET

By: Dr. Rose DiLeva

Question: Canine Cancer

My dog, a 5 year old, male, Golden Retriever, stopped eating and started to lose weight rapidly earlier this year. My veterinarian suggested an abdominal ultrasound. Much to my surprise and disappointment he was diagnosed with liver cancer. I don't want to put him through chemotherapy. Are there any holistic treatments available for us to pursue?

Answer:

First, let me explain very simply just what "cancer" is. Cancer is the uncontrollable growth of cells in one or more locations in the body. Under normal, healthy conditions the cells of the immune system would attack and eliminate any abnormal or foreign cells that develop or gain access into the body. When the body's immune system is weak or compromised by illness, stress, poor diet, or environmental toxins, it may not be able to kill all the cells that should not be there. Consequently, an abnormal rate of cell growth occurs. These abnormal cells are then considered a cancer. The name the cancer gets is generally based on the cell type or origin of the cells. For example, Mast cell tumors are made up primarily of mast cells. Squamous cell carcinoma is made up primarily of squamous cells. Osteosarcoma (bone cancer) is made up primarily of osteocytes, and so on.

Presently, cancer is the number one "natural" cause of death in dogs. In 22 years of practice I have seen cancer go from a fairly low and even rare incidence to a very high incidence. Cancer is by far the most common condition that I treat in pets, particularly dogs. It is more common in pure breed than mixed breed dogs.

Treatment plans are individualized to each particular patient and their needs. Immune system support is always a part of my treatment. Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chinese herbal supplements, Anti-oxidant therapy, Neoplasene treatment, Chiropractic adjustments, Reiki and Intravenous Vitamin C are some of the treatment possibilities at my Animal Wellness Center in Chadds Ford, Pa. Chinese herbal protocols for specific types of cancer are instituted and combined with one or more additional treatments. Herbal tinctures are formulated on site for each pet at the time of their initial consultation. Herbs from China, India, Australia, the Amazon and North America are used. The pet's diet is evaluated and recommendations for improvement are given. Comfort level and quality of life are of utmost importance. Side effects are rare to non-existent to date. Clients are also instructed in the practice of visualization and positive thought with respect to their pet's cancer.

Presently, we are in the process of compiling and documenting the various cancers we see and the treatments used. A case in point is "Cleo Ann", a 10-year old, female Bischon. She was diagnosed with liver cancer and liver cirrhosis. Cleo was given a very grave prognosis and two months to live. Her owner was devastated and very upset by this news. She came to see me shortly after the diagnosis. Cleo's liver enzymes were all elevated and some off the charts. I started her off with a combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbs for the cancer and to strengthen her immune system.

Within four weeks of treatment her liver values improved, her appetite returned and she was wagging her tail again. We started to increase the intervals between her acupuncture treatments and continued to monitor her liver blood values. If you were to look at her you would never imagine that she had cancer. She was the picture of health. Obviously, her two month death sentenced passed without consequence. Cleo's owner was committed to her treatment protocol and adhered to it as one year, two years, three years, four years and more passed. Her liver values came back into the normal range for much of that time. Sometimes only one of the three liver values we monitored was abnormally elevated. Adjustments were made to her treatment protocol as determined by me. On the occasions when the values were elevated she had no clinical signs of illness at all. Both her owner and I were extremely pleased with her progress. Then, one day I received a call from her owner saying that Cleo had stopped eating. Upon physical examination Cleo was thinner, with yellowish colored gums, skin and sclera (the white part of the eye). Her skin had a yellowish tint to it. What I suspected was verified by blood analysis and x-rays. Cleo was in liver failure and the cancer started, once again, to drain the body's defense system, only this time it won. Cleo was euthanized peacefully. It was a sad day for all of us that knew her. Cleo lived 5 years past the time conventional veterinary medicine said she would live and she had a good quality of life the entire time. She was 15 years old.