

## ***ASK THE VET***

Rose DiLeva VMD, MS, CVCP, CVA

### **PET CANCER DIET**

#### Question:

I have heard that there are specific dietary recommendations for pets with cancer. Is this true? Also, are there any other supplements that can be used to help fight cancer?

#### Answer:

There are numerous options to consider when dealing with a pet that has been diagnosed with cancer. There are many different kinds of malignant cancer. Osteosarcoma is a type of bone cancer that is very aggressive and very painful. Squamous cell carcinoma is typically made up of a cell type called squamous cells. It tends to invade soft tissues such as the gums and mouth. It too is very aggressive and fast growing. Some cancers start in one part of the body and spread (metastasize) to other parts of the body such as the liver, lungs and spleen. Benign tumors (non-cancerous) are generally removed without incident unless they have become too large and compress other organs affecting their structure or function.

The type of cancer can determine the recommended course of action. From a holistic point of view there are some considerations that may be beneficial. Data is scant at the moment proving that these actions are effective; however, many clinical cases do show that the pet's quality of life is better than would be expected with solely a chemotherapy or radiation protocol.

Diet is of utmost importance. The first rule of thumb is to keep the pet eating. An animal whose appetite is decreased or gone has little chance of fighting this disease. Based on work done by Dr. Ogilvie, one should use a homemade diet that is low in carbohydrates with moderate amounts of fat and protein. For dogs 50% of the mixture should be poultry or fish, for cats increase this to 80%. For dogs the other 50% should be mixed frozen or fresh vegetables, for cats decrease the percentage to 20%. Additionally, olive oil or flax can be used as the fat source at a dose of 1 teaspoon per 20 pounds of body weight. As a source of calcium try calcium carbonate at a dose of approximately 250 milligrams per 15 pounds of body weight. Both dogs and cats should have a vitamin-mineral supplement that your veterinarian can recommend. Cats require the amino acid taurine; therefore, add 250-400 milligrams daily to this mixture. This formula is not completely balanced and should be re-evaluated weekly based on the pet's weight, disease progression and body condition.

Antioxidants are often recommended in the treatment of cancer in animals, typically in patients that are old and possibly are experiencing the side effects of more conventional treatment. These pets can gain benefits for joint pain, mobility, cognitive dysfunction and other age-related diseases. Antioxidants, such as Vitamin C, E and selenium, are best given in combination since many are mutually dependent on each other. There are conflicting reports regarding antioxidant use with chemotherapy or radiation in the treatment of cancer. Clinical studies addressing the pros and cons of utilizing antioxidants in this situation have been published. One trial suggests that antioxidants mitigate the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. The evidence is still conflicting.

Supportive measures are imperative to the cancer pet. Age- related and chronic diseases such as arthritis, rheumatism, muscle spasms, cognitive decline, diabetes, hyperthyroidism and the pain of the tumor itself can be helped with additional modalities. Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Reiki, Massage, Veterinary Orthopedic Manipulation and Herbal Medicine can be very beneficial in elevating such symptoms.

Dr. Rose DiLeva is a University of Pennsylvania graduate and an awarding-winning author. She practices alternative and conventional veterinary medicine at her Animal Wellness Center in Chadds Ford, Pa. Dr. DiLeva is a certified veterinary acupuncturist and a certified veterinary chiropractitioner. She can be reached at 610-558-1616 for appointments or telephone consultations. Her web site is [www.altpetdoc.com](http://www.altpetdoc.com).