

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Bone Cancer in Dogs

While there are several types of recognized bone cancer, the most common type is called osteosarcoma. Osteosarcoma is a tumor that can affect any bone in the body, although it typically affects the leg bones. This tumor can affect any dog at any age, but most dogs with osteosarcoma are middle-aged to elderly large breed dogs. It develops deep within the bone and becomes progressively more painful as it grows outward and the bone is destroyed from the inside out. The lameness goes from intermittent to constant over a period of 1 to 3 months. Swelling becomes obvious as the tumor grows and normal bone is replaced by tumorous bone.

Diagnosis is typically made based on clinical signs and radiographic findings, although some cases may also require a biopsy for confirmation.

Treatments vary depending on which bone is affected; however, amputation of the affected limb followed by several doses of chemotherapy is usually recommended. While losing a leg is handicapping to a human, losing one leg out of four does not restrict a dog's activity level. Running and playing are not inhibited by amputation once the surgical recovery period is over. Once amputation is completed, 100% of the pain associated with the tumor is now gone. The average survival time with amputation alone is about 3-6 months. The average survival time with amputation and several doses of chemotherapy is about 1 year. This would usually be a good quality of life without pain or illness. There are other surgical options available, so if you suspect that your pet may have a bone tumor, please see your veterinarian right away to discuss treatment plans.

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