



## **My pet has an oral tumor... what's next?**

You or your veterinarian may have noticed a tumor in your pet's mouth, a common question is "what's next?" A tumor by definition is a swelling. In dogs, the mouth consists of 5.4 % of all reported tumor locations. In cats, oral tumors occur more frequently at 7.4% - 10.6% of all tumor locations. Tumors can be inflammation, hyperplasia, infections, immune responses, or neoplasms which can be benign and malignant (cancer). Only 6% of canine oral tumors or swellings are made up of malignant neoplasms and the occurrence is lower in cats. Some symptoms your pet may be exhibiting are increased drooling, halitosis, difficulty eating or swallowing, or even swelling to the face.

The first step is to have the veterinarian do a clinical examination. The doctor will examine the size and location, checking for any mobility or any other abnormal findings with structures around the tumor. A full physical examination is also important to examine lymph nodes, auscultation (listening) of the heart and lungs so the doctor can determine what the recommended treatment plan will be. Pre-operative chest radiographs, CT, and/or MRI may be recommended.

The second step is to get the tumor diagnosed and staged. After pre-operative blood work is done, a biopsy sample will be obtained under anesthesia. The sample will be sent to a pathologist experienced with oral pathology. Dental radiographs will determine how much bone resorption/invasion has occurred, and play an important part in pre operative planning.

If the tumor is benign no further treatment may be needed. Based on the biopsy results several options for your pet may be available. These options may include medical therapy orally, chemotherapy, melanoma vaccines, radiation, or surgery. Often your veterinarian will recommend a combination of treatments. Some treatments can result in a cure.