



## **Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma in Cats**

Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common oral tumor in cats. Most tumors are located in the gum tissues surrounding the teeth or sublingual (under the tongue). Cats that have oral tumors exhibit signs of drooling, halitosis, difficulty eating or swallowing, bleeding from the mouth.

Although the cause of the tumors are unknown, some risk factors for cats include being in a household where an owner currently smokes or previously did. The use of flea collars has been associated with an increase in tumor development. Also cats that eat canned food regularly or canned tuna are at a higher risk for SCC tumors. Environmental factors are suspected to play a role due to a cat's grooming habits exposing the oral cavity to carcinogens on its fur.

A tissue biopsy is needed to determine the tumor type and for staging it. Intra-Oral radiographs help determine how much bone destruction may have occurred and can help aide in the diagnosis and treatment options. Due to their location oral tumors are typically diagnosed late in the disease process.

Treatment options are limited depending on location of tumor, size and stage. There has been no therapy shown to date to be a great success. Surgery is the treatment of choice; however cats do not tolerate radical oral surgery. SCC tumors in cats have a poor prognosis and only about 10% have a survival rate over 12 months. Due to the severe pain and the rapid growth of a tumor, which leads to difficulties eating and swallowing, most cats are euthanized shortly after diagnosis.