



Oral Tumors in Cats

Is that lump you're seeing in your cat's mouth normal? Or is it something to be concerned about? Sometimes a swelling or enlargement of the tissue in a cat's mouth can be related to infection or inflammation. This may look extremely aggressive, but with appropriate treatment the problem can be quickly resolved. Treatment may require removing the tooth or teeth associated with inflammation, or treatment with the appropriate medicine. These swellings can be seen when there is a tooth-root infection, feline resorptive lesions or feline chronic gingivostomatitis present.



Severe periodontal infection around this cat's canine tooth (the one on the far right) is causing a swelling of the upper jaw that can mimic cancer- in this case periodontal disease is causing the swelling.

However, cats also can develop both benign and malignant growths. Cats will frequently hide the symptoms that there is anything wrong until the mass has gotten to be quite large or painful. This is especially true for the #1 type of malignant cancer in cats, squamous cell carcinoma, which frequently begins under the tongue where no one can see it.



The irregular area on the bottom of this cat's tongue was identified during a routine oral exam that was being done as part of their regular dental health treatment. We diagnosed this cat with squamous cell carcinoma.

If we see a mass or growth in your cat's mouth, then the only way to know for sure whether it is a benign or malignant is to take a biopsy sample to identify what type of growth is present. Many diseases in the cat's mouth can look the same on the surface, especially if there is any inflammation involved. By taking a biopsy sample, we can accurately identify the type of disease that is present and the best

treatment options. In addition to taking a biopsy of the lesion, taking dental x-rays are important to identify how extensive the growth is, so that we can better formulate a treatment plan, as well as monitor how well any treatment is working. Depending on the biopsy results, we may also make suggestions for further diagnostic tests to be performed, including lymph node biopsy, chest x-rays and abdominal (belly) ultrasound, prior to pursuing treatment.

Each pet is different, and each oral tumor is different- and we will be working closely with you to identify the best ways to give your pet the best quality of life that we can. This may mean curing them of their disease through surgery, or helping to keep them as comfortable as possible for the time they have left with us, or some variation in between. Our goal at Sacramento Veterinary Dental Services is to keep your pet happy and comfortable by offering treatment options based on your pet's individual needs. Below you will find more information about select types of common oral tumors in cats.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

This is the most commonly diagnosed oral cancer in cats. Unfortunately, this is also an aggressive malignancy that tends to invade the nearby tissues surrounding the tumor. What this means for your cat is that treatment can sometimes be very difficult if the tumor is not identified early on. However, if surgery is a possibility, we can achieve an excellent long-term outcome if the entire tumor can be removed. This type of cancer develops from the cells that line the surfaces of the mouth, though it can also develop on the skin and elsewhere. Unfortunately, cats with squamous cell carcinoma generally do not respond well to radiation therapy or chemotherapy, so surgery and pain management is the mainstay of therapy.



The reddened, oozing mass at the back of this kitty's jaw was diagnosed as a squamous cell carcinoma.

Fibrosarcoma

This is a type of cancer that develops from the cells that form the connective tissues in the oral cavity. These types of tumors tend to grow by sending out tendrils of cells into the surrounding areas, which means that to completely remove this type of tumor, a wide margin of normal appearing tissue must be removed with the tumor. Though these tumors do not tend to spread to other areas of the body (metastasize), surgery to treat this type of cancer can be complicated depending on the location.



The swelling and ulcerated red lesion on this cat's hard palate (the roof of the mouth) was diagnosed as a fibrosarcoma.

Other Tumors

Other tumor types in cats can occur, though they are considered rare. These tumors can include odontomas, osteomas, osteosarcoma, and other types of tumors. If your pet is diagnosed with one of these other tumor types we will work one-on-one with you to identify the best treatment plan to keep your cat as happy and healthy as possible.