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## LUNG TUMORS

**What is it?** Lung tumors are masses of abnormal, often cancerous cells within the lung tissue. They can be primary (originating from the lung itself) or secondary (spread of a tumor at a distant location in the body). Some tumors are not cancerous and are a result of a foreign object that has been walled off within the lung tissue or are granulomas.

**What animals are affected?** Lung tumors can occur in any animal. Patients are usually middle age to older. Animals whose owners smoke or those exposed to other household pollutants are at higher risk. Brachycephalic (short faced) breeds are also at higher risk.

**What are the clinical signs?** Signs can include lethargy, inappetance, coughing—sometimes with blood present – dyspnea (difficult respiration), and weight loss. Many show no signs at all, and the mass is found incidentally on a radiograph.

**How is it diagnosed?** Diagnosis is made with radiographs of the thorax. CT and MRI can also be helpful but are not as readily available to most clinics. Ultrasound guided fine needle aspirates can be done to obtain a presurgical diagnosis, but depending on the size and location of the mass, we often just proceed to surgery and obtain an excisional biopsy when the mass is removed. Bronchoscopy can also sometimes be of benefit in better characterizing the mass prior to surgery.

**How is it treated?** Treatment involves an exploratory thoracotomy either with an open procedure (a lateral thoracotomy between two ribs or a median sternotomy where the sternum is split to gain access to the chest) or via thoracoscopy (looking in the chest with a fiberoptic camera). Once the mass has been identified and isolated, it is then removed. This procedure typically involves removing all or part of the affected lung lobe—lobectomy.

**What is the aftercare?** The patient will remain hospitalized at least one night after surgery and will likely have a chest tube in place for 12 to 48 hours to help evacuate air (a result of the surgery) and fluid from the chest. Once the patient is discharged, they will have at least two weeks of restricted activity.

**What is the prognosis?** Dogs and cats typically recover very well from thoracoscopy and thoracotomy procedures. Prognosis for those with removable lung masses can be very good and, in some instances, curative. If there is evidence of metastasis to the lymph nodes or there are other sites involved, long term prognosis is guarded.

**Can it be prevented?** Decreasing an animal's exposure to second hand smoke and other pollutants can decrease the risk of lung tumors. Early detection and treatment can often lead to a good and extended period of life.

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