

Brain Tumors

Who Can Get One?

Dogs and cats can develop brain tumors. Brain tumors are more frequently observed in middle-aged to senior dogs and cats, with the majority being over 7 years of age at the time of diagnosis.

What Clinical Signs are Associated with Brain Tumors?

The signs and symptoms associated with a brain tumor can differ significantly. Common indicators consist of alterations in behavior, seizures, compulsive circling, head pressing, lack of coordination, and visual impairments. Seizures are the most common issue reported in dogs, whereas changes in behavior frequently serve as the initial indication in cats. Symptoms typically manifest gradually over a period of months; however, a sudden onset can occur, though less frequently.

How are Brain Tumors Diagnosed?

A brain tumor is frequently suspected based on the patient's history, age, and the results of neurological examinations. In senior dogs or cats exhibiting advancing symptoms of brain dysfunction or experiencing new seizures, a brain tumor is suspected. Advanced imaging techniques such as MRI or CT scans, in conjunction with a potential spinal tap, are required for a more conclusive diagnosis.

What are the Treatment Options for Brain Tumors?

There are two primary methods for treating brain tumors: supportive therapy and definitive therapy. Supportive therapy focuses on alleviating the secondary effects of the tumor, whereas definitive therapy is intended to decrease the tumor's size or, in exceptional instances, completely eradicate the tumor. Supportive therapy generally involves administering anti-inflammatory doses of steroids, such as prednisone, to reduce swelling and inflammation linked to a tumor. Anti-epileptic drugs are also given to patients experiencing seizures. In many cases, expecting a complete cure for a brain tumor is not realistic; however, surgical removal or debulking, radiation, and chemotherapy can be employed to alleviate clinical symptoms and extend survival.

Prognosis

Typically, the outlook for patients receiving only supportive therapy (which includes steroids and potentially anti-seizure medications) is poor, with average survival durations varying from several weeks to a few months.

The prognosis associated with definitive treatment differs depending on the type of tumor, its location, and the method of treatment employed. Additionally, long-term outcomes vary between dogs and cats, with meningiomas (a tumor that arises from the membranes surrounding the brain) in cats frequently exhibiting a more favorable prognosis when surgical removal is feasible.