



WSAVA
Global Veterinary Community



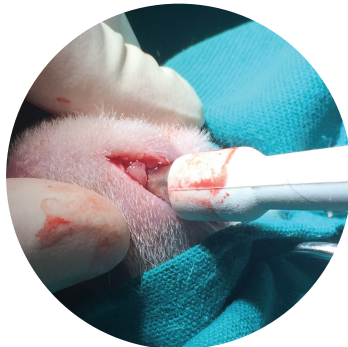
WSAVA
Global Dental Committee

The 3 Questions In Oral Cancer

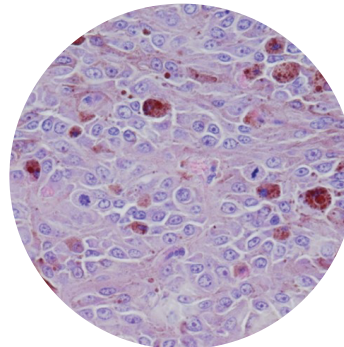
Visit your vet immediately, if you notice:

- bad breath
- difficulties eating
- bleeding from the mouth or nose
- lump(s)
- swelling(s)
- ulcer(s)
- tissue colour change
- any other change in the mouth or face of your animal

1. What Is It?



Biopsy means taking a piece of an abnormal-looking tissue with the animal under general anaesthesia.



The sample is sent to a lab for a histopathology examination – evaluation of tissue under the microscope to determine if it is cancer (synonyms are tumor or neoplasia) or not.



Benign cancers do not spread through the body, but can still cause severe local destruction.

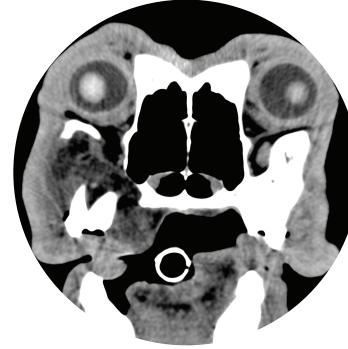


Malignant cancers spread through the body (i.e., metastasize).

2. How Big Is It?

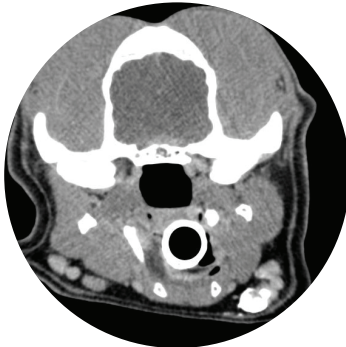


The local extent of oral cancer is evaluated mostly by computed tomography (CT) of the head.



We have to understand if cancer is limited to the oral cavity or if it has invaded into any surrounding structures. CT is ideally performed just before biopsy as it helps better planning of the biopsy.

3. Has It Spread Through The Body?



If the cancer is malignant, lymphnodes of the head and neck, lungs and abdominal organs need to be examined for metastasis. This is done commonly by full-body CT.

CT can be combined or replaced with abdominal ultrasound (US), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), (surgical or needle) sampling of the lymphnodes. PET-CT is even more sensitive, but not yet available widely.

Only after we have answers to all 3 questions, the optimal treatment plan and most likely outcome for the animal can be created.

Oral cancer can be treated by:

- surgery
- radiation therapy
- electrochemotherapy
- immunotherapy
- (metronomic) chemotherapy
- photodynamic therapy
- or combinations of these treatments (i.e., multimodal approach)

Most of the oral cancers, especially in dogs, can be cured, if diagnosed and treated early!