

# Pet Owner Fact Sheet: Canine Mast Cell Tumors

## WHAT IS IT?

- ▶ The most common malignant skin cancer in dogs. Mast cells are a part of the immune system often involved in allergic reactions. This is why mast cell tumors (MCT) can be red, itchy and swollen.

## WHAT DO I SEE?

- ▶ Any lump or bump can be a MCT. This tumor has a wide range of appearances, from normal to red and bleeding; from raised and superficial to very deep and fixed; they may feel soft and fluctuant or firm.

## HOW DO THEY DIAGNOSE A MCT?

- ▶ Most MCTs are easily diagnosed with needle aspiration biopsy. A surgical biopsy can be necessary to select the best treatment. If biopsy indicates a high grade tumor, the dog has an increased risk of death.

## WHAT MCT ARE DIFFICULT TO TREAT?

- ▶ Larger tumors, rapidly growing and those in specific locations or those that have spread.
- ▶ Dogs can have more than one at the same time and can have several in their lifetime.

## WHAT IS THE BEST TREATMENT?

- ▶ Most important treatment is surgery. Some dogs might need anti-cancer drugs and/or radiation therapy.

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**The majority of MCTs will be  
cured with surgical excision**

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