

# Pet Owner Fact Sheet: Melanoma of the Mouth

## Background:

- ▶ Aggressive form of cancer in the mouth with 80-90% chance to spread to lymph nodes and lungs.

## ▶ What are the clinical signs?

Lump in the mouth, bad odor and bleeding from the mouth, difficulty chewing.

## How do veterinarians diagnose an oral melanoma?

- ▶ The vet will do a fine needle aspirate or take a biopsy of the mass.

## How do veterinarians test if the cancer has spread?

- ▶ Chest x-rays and a fine needle aspirate of neck lymph nodes samples are used.
- ▶ CT scan is more precise to detect early spread and necessary for surgical planning.

## Prognosis

- ▶ Variable, depends on extent of tumor and treatment; from a few months to over a year.

## What is treatment for the tumor in the mouth?

- ▶ Surgery for small tumors is the first option.
- ▶ Removal of part of the jaw and lymph nodes is often required. Excellent cosmetic and functional results are possible.
- ▶ Radiotherapy can shrink and reduce discomfort for large tumors.

## What treatment prevents tumor spread?

- ▶ Chemotherapy has limited efficacy.
- ▶ Melanoma vaccine maybe be beneficial.

## What are bad signs?

- ▶ Large tumors, tumors that have already spread.

