

Veterinary Healthcare Team: Communicating with Pet Owners About Cancer



Meeting pet owners' expectations when their pet has cancer is challenging for primary care veterinarians. Owners want:

- ▶ Continued involvement of their primary care veterinarian
- ▶ Referral to specialists
- ▶ Collaboration with other veterinarians
- ▶ Answers to questions

This WSAVA Oncology Committee Fast Fact offers guidance on addressing owners' questions about their pet's cancer diagnosis.



SURGERY

Surgery is an important cancer treatment

- ▶ A second opinion with a specialist surgeon may identify advanced surgical options
- ▶ Incisions may be larger than expected
- ▶ Promising a cure should be avoided



CHEMOTHERAPY

Pet owners worry about side effects

- ▶ Side effects are less common than pet owners expect
- ▶ Side effects are less severe than pet owners expect
- ▶ Most pet owners would choose chemotherapy for a second pet



RADIATION THERAPY

A pet owner survey reveals concerns about:

- ▶ Side effects which are less severe than anticipated
- ▶ Repeated anesthesia
- ▶ Most pet owners would choose radiation therapy for a second pet



FINANCIAL DISCUSSION

Pet owners want veterinarians to initiate these discussions.

- ▶ Finances should be addressed in context of pet's health benefits



WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- ▶ Documents for pet owners should use simple, clear language that an 11-13-year-old can easily read.



This QR code has a list of articles including surveys of pet owners about cancer treatment and communication studies.

