

PRIMARY LUNG TUMOURS IN DOGS AND CATS

Primary lung tumours (originating in the lung) are uncommon in dogs and cats. More often, lung tumours result from cancer that has spread (metastasised) from elsewhere in the body. When primary lung tumours do occur, they are typically adenocarcinomas—arising from glandular lung tissue—but may also include fibrosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma, or other rare types.

Risk factors include secondhand smoke exposure and environmental pollutants. Flat-faced breeds (brachycephalics) may be at increased risk.

Signs & Symptoms:

Many pets show no signs early on. Tumours are often discovered incidentally during imaging for unrelated reasons. When symptoms do occur, they may include:

- Coughing
- Weight loss or reduced appetite
- Lethargy or weakness
- Difficulty breathing
- Regurgitation (especially with large or central tumours)
- Lameness due to secondary bone changes (hypertrophic osteopathy)

Diagnosis:

- **Imaging:** Chest X-rays and CT scans are key to identifying lung masses.
- **Sampling:** Fine needle aspiration (FNA) may be used to collect cells for diagnosis.
- **Staging tests:** Blood and urine tests, abdominal ultrasound, and sometimes biopsies to rule out metastasis or find the original cancer source.

Treatment Options:

1. **Surgery (Lung Lobectomy):**
The most effective treatment for solitary tumours without spread. The affected lung lobe is removed via thoracotomy (chest surgery) or less commonly, minimally invasive surgery. Blood vessels and the bronchus to the affected lobe are sealed with sutures or surgical staples. A chest tube is placed temporarily to assist with healing.
2. **Chemotherapy:**
Used if the tumour is malignant and especially if there's metastasis. The need depends on tumour type and microscopic analysis after surgery.
3. **Palliative Care:**
For widespread or inoperable disease, treatment focuses on comfort—such as pain relief and managing breathing difficulties.

Postoperative Care:

- Hospitalisation until your pet is breathing comfortably and pain is well managed.
- Restricted activity for 10–14 days.
- Incision care and use of an Elizabethan collar if needed.
- Follow-up chest X-rays to monitor for recurrence or metastasis.
- Pain management is critical for recovery.

Prognosis:

Prognosis depends on tumour type, size, lymph node involvement, and completeness of removal. Dogs with completely excised adenocarcinomas may live 15–20 months or longer. Cats tend to have a more guarded prognosis due to a higher likelihood of metastasis.



Prevention Tip:

Avoid exposing pets to secondhand smoke—it's a known risk factor for respiratory cancers in animals.