

Mass Removals

The Procedure

Mass removal surgery is typically performed to surgically manage cutaneous or subcutaneous masses in dogs and cats, the most common types of tumours being mast cell tumours or soft tissue sarcomas.

Typically, we will aim to excise the mass with wide lateral margins, including a section of normal skin, and a deep fascial layer from the underlying muscle to attempt to capture the tumour in its entirety.

Once the tumour has been excised, then closure can either be primary where the resulting skin edges are simply sutured to one another, or advanced reconstruction techniques may be required where skin from another region of the body is mobilised (e.g. as a graft or flap) and brought to the surgical site to facilitate closure.

Following surgery, the tumour is sent off for histopathological assessment where information about the behaviour of the tumour and whether it has been excised completely or incompletely is gathered. Typically, this takes 1-2 weeks before the results are back – your primary care vet will discuss these with you.

Surgical Site

Please check the surgical site twice a day for any signs of further swelling, weeping or pain to the touch. If you notice any of these, please arrange assessment with your primary care vet. A light dressing may cover the surgical site, this can be removed after 24-48hrs, though it is of no consequence if it falls off sooner.

For the first two weeks your pet should wear a rigid buster collar at all times except when under your direct supervision to prevent them from interfering with the surgical site. If your pet cannot eat or drink with the collar on, it is fine for it to be removed for this, but please replace it at all other times.

Commonly a fluid-like swelling (seroma) can accumulate under the skin at the surgical site. This is usually non-painful and will resolve with 5-7 days. We would not advise percutaneous drainage of any seroma.

If your pet has been discharged with a surgical drain in place, then this will need to be emptied (recording the volume and appearance of the fluid each time) and re-primed in an aseptic manner (using gloves) every eight hours until it is removed. Your vet will demonstrate how to do this at the discharge appointment, but please contact your primary care vet if you have any questions/concerns whilst the drain is in place. Surgical drains will typically be removed at the 2-3 days post-operative check.

Medication

Please follow the post operative discharge sheet that will be provided on the day of surgery. Your pet will come home with a combination of anti-inflammatories/pain killers.

Post operative checks

2-3 days and 12-14 days post operatively to check the surgical site.

Exercise

Your pet should be restricted to crate/small room rest and short (5min) lead walks in the garden for toileting purposes for the first two weeks after surgery.

After two weeks/when any stitches have been removed, you can gradually increase the length of their walks to gradually return them to normal activity over the course of two further weeks.

Post operative expectations and potential complications

Potential complications associated with this surgery are rare, but it is important to discuss this prior to surgery. They include:

1. Post operative infection
2. Wound breakdown
3. Incomplete excision of the tumour
4. Future recurrence of the tumour