



Dr. Brooke & Millie

Brooke Townsend, DVM - Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center

Dr. Brooke is a Greensboro native and works at Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center. A graduate of North Carolina State University, she has been practicing veterinary medicine for 14 years. Dr. Brooke enjoys working closely with pet owners to provide all of her patients with the best quality of life and medical care.

She and her husband, Murphy, are the proud parents of two beautiful girls, Eva and Lizzy, plus their four-legged family member, Lab Millie, the Dutchess of Milford adopted from Red Dog Farm Animal Rescue Network.

Dr. Brooke looks forward to meeting you and your pets! She provides care for dogs and cats including internal medicine and soft tissue surgery. She also has a strong interest in dermatology and geriatrics. Her goal is to work with you to provide your pet with the best quality of life from puppy and kitten-hood till they are ancient and gray!

LUMPS, MASSES AND BUMPS, OH MY!

Lumps, masses, bumps, tumors, moles, cysts, warts, growths... No matter what you may call it, when you first find one on your furry family member often we fear the worst. Don't panic but DO be proactive.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO FIRST?

Some masses are not a concern and some may even go away on their own. However, there are some that may get progressively worse very quickly so it is always best to have any mass looked at by your veterinarian ASAP. Don't wait for it to start bothering your pet. Some tumors can be quite serious without ever causing pain and some pets mask pain very well. What might be a minor change in behavior such as licking at the mass or a change in the way your pet sits is often a sign of discomfort. Licking the mass often causes infection and inflammation and can make things worse very quickly.

Before your appointment make notes so you have all the information on hand. When did you first notice the mass? Since you first noticed it has it changed in size or coloration? Are there any other similar or new masses anywhere else? Look at the area and skin around the mass – note if the area is red in color, ulcerated (open/bleeding), irritated, or inflamed. The night before your appointment look over and rub your pet thoroughly to see if you find any other areas of concern. If the mass is not easy to find or covered in hair it may also be a good idea to mark it with a circle or place a small dot with a permanent marker (or white out - if your pet has dark fur!)

WHAT WILL MY VETERINARIAN DO?

First your veterinarian will do a thorough examination. After assessing the lump and the rest of your pet's health, your veterinarian will make recommendations for further diagnostics or recommend waiting and monitoring for changes. However, only your veterinarian should make this call-comparing pictures on the internet is NOT an adequate way to evaluate masses!

The first step to diagnosis is collecting a sample for cytology (looking at it under the microscope). Depending on what your veterinarian finds, they may make recommendations for additional diagnostics such as bloodwork,

radiographs, or ultrasound. We all know how stressful and concerned you may be until you find out what the mass actually is, but don't rush the diagnostic process, getting a full and complete picture of the problem first is needed to make sure nothing is missed and we can plan a full treatment schedule tailored to your pet's specific concern or needs. Sometimes your veterinarian may want to reach out to a specialist for further diagnostics or opinions.

What could this mass be? And what are some different types of masses? First of all we don't like the "C" word either, and while not all masses are cancerous/malignant, the sooner you find them and begin treatment the better the outcome. But before we go to worst case scenario not every lump or bump on your pet will even actually be a tumor. Some superficial bumps can be anything from an insect bite, trauma/injury, hematoma, abscess or sebaceous cyst. Sometimes these are nothing to worry about and we often will just keep a very close eye on the area for any changes. Sometimes draining the cyst, antibiotics or surgical exploration of the area may be recommended.

TYPES OF TUMORS:

A tumor or neoplasm is an abnormal new growth of cells. These usually grow more rapidly than normal cells and will continue to grow if not treated. As they grow, neoplasms can intrude upon and damage surrounding cells or structures. The term can refer to benign or malignant (cancerous) growths.

Benign tumors - Benign tumors are a non-malignant tumor meaning they are localized to one area and do not spread to other parts of the body. When indicated, most benign tumors respond well to treatment/surgery. Keep in mind that recovery, cost and full removal or surgical excision is easier when the mass is still small. Some benign tumors do not require surgery, but others can grow large and lead to serious disease or complications because of their size. Some common benign tumors are: lipomas, papillomas, hyperplasia, histiocytomas, and adenomas.

Malignant tumors - Malignant tumors are cancerous growths meaning that they have the potential to spread to other areas or organs in the body. Catching them early before spread has occurred is critical! There are many types and different treatment options available with new discoveries happening every day. Some common malignant tumors are: mast cell tumors, melanomas, adenocarcinomas, carcinomas, hemangiosarcomas, and fibrosarcomas.

WHAT ARE COMMON TREATMENT OPTIONS?

Treatment options will vary greatly. The most common treatment option for benign tumors is surgical excision. At our hospital, we have a cryosurgical unit that allows us to remove by freezing certain skin masses. In many cases with this technique, patients don't even have to be sedated or under anesthesia! For malignant tumors often multiple steps in treatment are needed. Common options vary from surgical excision to radiation, and chemotherapy. Advancements in cancer treatments are changing every day. We have seen patients thrive and live a long good quality life for many years after their first diagnosis.

IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS:

The most important thing to remember from all of this is to be proactive. Preventative care and early detection is key! Our pets unfortunately age much faster than we do so waiting a few months to have your veterinarian check a "lump" may be similar to you or I going a few years with undiagnosed cancer. This often decreases our treatment options and ability to control or reduce metastasis to other parts of the body. Even in worse case situations when you opt not to do extensive treatment, talk to your veterinarian about minimal things you can do to keep your pets comfortable. Often pain medications, steroids, nutraceuticals, and diet can aid in your pet's overall quality of life.

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