

Hemangiosarcoma, Spleen & Liver

Basics

OVERVIEW

- Malignant tumor arising from blood vessel cells or related cells of spleen and liver
- Tumor may rupture and bleed leading to collapse and even sudden death
- Often arises on the spleen and spreads via blood system to liver, lungs, kidneys, muscle and other organs
- A less malignant version, the hemangioma, may present similarly and is difficult to differentiate until biopsy; higher survival rate with this tumor



SIGNALMENT

- Dogs and very rarely cats
- Boxers, German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, Great Danes, English Setters and pointers commonly affected
- Dogs usually 8-10 years old at presentation

SIGNS

- Sudden collapse, weakness, not doing right
- Pale gums with slower bleeding or chronic disease
- Weight loss
- Lameness
- Unusual neurological signs

CAUSES

- Genetics seems to be the greatest predisposing cause

DIAGNOSIS

- Blood tests show anemia, blood loss, low platelets, unusual blood cells
- Abnormal liver or kidney values depending on organ affected
- X-rays of chest and abdomen
- Ultrasound to determine extent of spread
- Clotting tests
- Histopathology definitive for diagnosis
- Abdominal fluid analysis

Treatment

SURGERY

- Aggressive surgical removal is treatment of choice; removal of spleen most often performed
- Removal of solitary large liver masses also possible and may be curative
- Stage III malignant tumors carry poor prognosis and short term survival
- Solitary masses benign or malignant carry better survival times
- Masses alone or with bleeding may take somewhat of a toll on overall patient health
- Blood transfusions may be needed

CHEMOTHERAPY

- Chemo is advised for metastatic masses and an oncologist should be consulted
- Chemotherapy may moderately extend survival times

Follow-Up Care

PATIENT MONITORING

- Monitor for re-growth of masses with X-rays every 2 months
- Good nutrition and fluid support post op imperative for survival
- Restricted exercise post op 2-3 weeks
- Follow-up blood testing to monitor patient health and organ function