

Mammary (breast) Problems in Dogs: An Overview

Overview

- Mammary (breast) problems are most common in female dogs that haven't been spayed.
- Signs of a problem tend to include swelling, redness, an obvious lump, or discharge from the nipple.
- Most mammary problems can be treated, but left without veterinary help, can get worse and become harder to treat.
- Contact your vet if your dog has a mammary problem.

General information



Although mammary problems can affect any female dog, they are most common in those that haven't been spayed. This is because mammary problems are usually linked to hormones or pregnancy. Most mammary problems can be treated, but if your dog is left without veterinary help, the problem could get worse, become more serious or possibly even life threatening.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of mammary problems include:

- Red, swollen or painful mammary gland(s)

- Mammary lump(s)
- Unexpected milk, blood, or pus from the mammary glands
- Wounds or ulcers

Causes

Mastitis - mastitis is inflammation and infection in a mammary gland. It's a very painful condition that causes swelling, redness, and often discharge from the nipple. Mastitis is most common in lactating dogs, and those having a phantom pregnancy. Left untreated, mastitis infections can spread around the rest of the body and cause severe illness.

Phantom pregnancy - during a false pregnancy, the mammary glands can become swollen and produce milk.

Mammary lumps - there are a few different types of mammary lump, some harmless and some cancerous. It's important to get any new lumps checked by your vet before it causes a problem, or potentially spreads elsewhere in the body.

Skin lumps - skin lumps in the mammary region should always be checked by your vet.

Wounds or ulcers - wounds, ulcerations and weeping sores on a mammary gland tend to develop if there is another underlying problem (such as mastitis, phantom pregnancy or a lump).

When to contact your vet

It's important to get your dog checked by your vet if you notice any changes to their mammary glands, especially if you notice any redness, swelling or new lumps.

Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?

Prevention

It's not possible to protect your dog from all mammary problems but you can reduce the risk of some by [neutering your dog](#).

Published: October 2020