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"Annie" - Flat Coated Retriever with Cancer



Annie

Annie the flat coated retriever, was sent to see me by another veterinary surgeon because of the difficulty in controlling a painful lameness in her front leg.

It was very evident from my examination that Annie had a marked restriction in the flexion of her elbow due to the presence of a significant swelling.

Radiography demonstrated that arthritis alone could not account for the severity of the clinical presentation: there had to be another explanation!

A deep biopsy of the swelling around the joint was performed as previous needle biopsies had been unsuccessful in obtaining a diagnosis. Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the biopsy was confirmed as a type of cancer.

Sadly, Flatcoated retrievers appear to be one of the most affected breed of dog with regard to a variety of different cancer types.

The next problem was to determine Annie's treatment. The pathologist specified the cancer type as being unlikely to spread elsewhere in the body but to behave aggressively at the original site. Consequently, amputation of the limb was the only treatment option likely to effect a complete cure and remove the source of pain.

The prospect of limb amputation is always daunting for owners. The notion of owning a disabled or disfigured pet is always a hard concept to overcome. Decisions have to be made on the basis that the patient will significantly benefit from the procedure. On that basis, amputation was not only going to remove a source of considerable cause of pain but also had a good chance of a complete cure.

Surgery went extremely well, Annie recovered astonishingly quickly and her great enthusiasm for life reinforced that the correct decision had been made. Very disappointingly, it was discovered that the cancer had indeed spread despite all our hopes.

This underlines the fact that when making decisions based on the future we are dealing with probabilities and not certainties. I am in no doubt that Annie has won something from her operation as her current exuberance demonstrates, unfortunately she didn't quite win the jackpot!

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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