

Feline Lymphoma

A brief guide on disease progression including end-of-life symptoms

Common Signs of Pain

- Panting
- Lameness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Pacing
- Abnormal posture
- Body tensing
- Poor grooming habits
- Tucked tail
- Dilated pupils
- Licking sore spot
- Muscle atrophy
- Decreased appetite
- Vocalizing/yowling
- Reclusive behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Avoiding stairs/jumping
- Depressed
- Unable to stand

Before your pet's condition becomes unmanageable or they are losing quality of life, it is important to begin end-of-life care discussions. Learn about pet hospice care and/or euthanasia services in your area so you are prepared for what lies ahead.

What is it?

Lymphoma is a common type of cancer in cats. It is caused by the proliferation of malignant lymphocytes (type of white blood cell) that often occurs in the chest, kidneys, nose, skin, spine, and gastrointestinal tract. There are several classification systems for lymphoma based on whether or not it is high, intermediate, or low grade (aggressiveness), where it is located in the body, and what type of cells are involved (T-cells vs. B-cells). Often times, cats present to their veterinarian with clinical signs such as depression, lethargy, vomiting, weight loss, and with a decreased appetite.

How is it treated?

Chemotherapy is the best treatment for lymphoma. There are a wide range of chemotherapeutic drugs that can be used in combination to combat this disease. Prednisone, in conjunction with other chemotherapeutics, will often improve the quality and quantity of life. While there is no cure for lymphoma, it can be put into remission with treatment.

What is the prognosis for feline lymphoma?

About 75% of cats go into remission with treatment, but unfortunately, median survival time is usually only 6 months, as most cats tend to relapse. If left untreated, most cats will not survive longer than 4-6 weeks. Palliative care like nutritional therapy, prednisone alone, and pain medication can help to keep cats comfortable as the disease progresses. A personalized treatment plan is important to slow the progression of lymphoma. Talk to your veterinarian regarding the best treatment protocol for your cat.

What symptoms can present as the disease progresses?

EARLY STAGES:

- Decreased appetite
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Lethargy
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Eye infections

**If your pet vocalizes due to pain or anxiety, please consult with your tending veterinarian immediately.*

LATE STAGES:

- Persistent early stages
- Lethargy, depression
- Reclusive behavior
- Organ dysfunction
- Presence of a mass
- Constipation due to dehydration
- Difficulty breathing
- Fluid in lungs or chest
- Distended abdomen
- Anorexia

CRISIS:

Immediate veterinary assistance needed regardless of the disease

- Difficulty breathing
- Prolonged seizures
- Uncontrollable vomiting/diarrhea
- Sudden collapse
- Profuse bleeding – internal or external
- Crying/whining from pain*