Cancer – Hemangiosarcoma (blood vessel cancer)

1. Overview of end stage of the disease.
   - This disease is most commonly found in the spleen, right atrium (heart), and skin. Metastasis is very probable with hemangiosarcoma and generally has already taken place prior to diagnosis. Common sites for metastasis include liver, lungs, and brain.
   - Dogs with hemangiosarcoma typically display weakness, exercise intolerance, and decreased appetite most likely due to blood loss to the tumor. They may accumulate fluid (blood) in the abdomen which may appear distended, have difficulty breathing, or become listless and lacking in energy.
   - Hemangiosarcoma is generally not diagnosed until blood-filled tumors rupture. Ruptures can happen suddenly and without a trigger (such as trauma), and may be large and rapid leading to collapse and/or death or they may be slow. In cases with slowly bleeding tumors, your pet may be restless, inappetent, depressed, or lethargic. These bleeds may clot and resolve on their own or may continue until your pet’s blood loss overwhelms them.

2. Is this condition painful?
   - Hemangiosarcoma is not considered to be painful. Pain may develop as a result of pressure from tumor size or from blood buildup.

3. Making the decision to euthanize.
   - Many pets continue to live well and happily with hemangiosarcoma and then die suddenly due to blood loss from tumor rupture. If your pet has been diagnosed and has a good quality of life, you may or may not choose to euthanize them early to prevent them from dying uncomfortably.
   - Other dogs may deteriorate from this condition due to tumor size or blood loss. In these patients, euthanasia is recommended to end suffering. Look at your pet’s gum color (pink is healthy, will become paler with blood loss), energy level, appetite, and interest in you and their surroundings to judge their quality of life to help determine when is the right time to euthanize.

4. What are the current medical therapies for this condition?
   - Surgical tumor excision followed by chemotherapy is the preferred treatment for this disease. Cutaneous hemangiosarcoma patients have better prognoses as surgical margins are easier to attain and are typically diagnosed earlier than visceral tumors.

5. Other advanced medical therapies documented.
   - Polysaccharopeptide is a mushroom-derived bioactive agent which has been shown to delay the progression of hemangiosarcoma progression and improve survival times. This treatment may be recommended for patients in whom other advanced treatments are unavailable. This is a relatively new treatment option and current studies are underway to accurately determine its effectiveness and long term potential.