

Ask the vet logo

Local Veterinary Surgeon Dan Flynn from Balmoral and Commons Brae Vets is back to answer your questions about problem pet issues. If you have a question you'd like the vet to write about send it to askdanthevet@gmail.com

My dog is perfectly healthy but I have noticed a small swelling on the side of his chest. It does not seem to be causing a problem, should I get it checked out?

It must be said firstly that no one can be 100% sure that a lump is not a tumour, just from a look or a feel of the said lump. However from experience, we as vets can give correct advise as to the best course of action that should be taken. It is important to know, how long this swelling has been there? Is it getting bigger rapidly, is there any pain when it is touched? Is it causing any problem with walking?

A very common swelling in this area, is a lipoma. This is a benign tumour composed of fat. It is seen mostly in dogs that are over weight and is positioned under the skin or can be under deeper muscle tissues. These can cause problems when they get very big and become an obstruction to front leg movement. Often a strict diet will help to reduce these, but often we will advise surgical removal to improve the animal's quality of life.

Lumps on the skin are also very common and will sometimes go unnoticed until they break out and start to bleed. Skin tags are the most benign form of lump but they can be numerous and unsightly, they can also get damaged and start to bleed.

When we assess a lump we may offer:

- For it to be rechecked after a particular time frame, and it is good to measure the size so that you are aware if it has grown.
- A fine needle aspirate, where some of the contents are drawn into a syringe and the then assessed under a microscope. This is quick and inexpensive, but is often inconclusive.
- A biopsy, where we surgically remove a small piece of the lump. This is then sent to a laboratory for histopathology. This is conclusive and will let us know how serious this lump is.
- Surgical removal may come at the end of these, or it may be the first option taken if we want immediate correction.

There are areas of are pets that we may not see too often and sometimes lumps can be missed.

Areas of concern would be;

- Under carriage especially in females where mammary tumours can develop
- Under the Tail, around the anal area.

All lumps, bumps and swellings should be taken seriously until satisfied that they are not a problem.

