

Screening for Bladder Cancer

Why is it important?

Marcia Dawson, Chair STCA Health Trust Fund

The STCGD has been awarded a \$1000.00 grant from the STCA's Health Trust Fund to hold a bladder screening clinic for our members, our friends, and other Scottie owners in our area. This is a great opportunity to put into action what we should all be doing with our Scotties once they reach the age of 5 years: Screen at least yearly for bladder cancer with an ultrasound exam. The earlier we can detect any abnormality in our dogs' bladders, the sooner we can get a diagnosis and start them on more effective therapy. Whichever therapy we choose, from NSAIDS or chemotherapy or alternative medicines and supportive diets, the sooner the better!

Why is this true? Why does early diagnosis translate to much more successful outcomes in our Scotties?

There is a wealth of compelling evidence that treating cancer earlier in its course is more successful than treating it when it is more advanced.

- **Genetic complexity:** Early stage cancer is much less genetically complex than later in its course. As a tumor grows, it changes in complexity and mutates and creates more genetic resistance to various therapies. This leads to failure of the drug. The earlier any therapy can get to a tumor, the more effective it will be.
- **Immune compromise:** Early in the course of cancer, the dog's immune system is stronger, and more capable of controlling runaway growth of cancer cells. Over time, as the undetected cancer grows unchecked, the immune system gets worn down and used up. This exhaustion of the immune system is a serious result of diagnosing cancer later in its course, and it robs the body of a major weapon of defense. Early detection allows us to provide essential immune support.
- **Blood supply:** Early in its development, a tumor is fairly well organized with structure and blood vessels that almost mimic normal cell growth. However, over time, the tumor becomes more and more abnormal with erratic behavior, runaway growth, and abnormal, gnarly blood vessels that are not able to deliver the cancer fighting drugs to the tumor. This translates again to failure of the therapy.
- **General health:** Early in the course of cancer, the patient, both human and dog, is stronger, healthier and better able to tolerate therapies. The quality of life is good, and starting the therapy before there are major symptoms, metastasis, and the involvement of other organs can help to prolong that quality of life.

Bladder cancer (TCC) in our Scotties is a serious health problem. We need to beat this devastating disease to the punch and detect it as early as we possibly can. Don't wait until your Scottie is straining to urinate, passing bloody urine, and acting uncomfortable. By then, it may be too late to do much good at all.

Barb Zink and the STCGD committee are organizing a screening clinic to be held in November with more details soon to follow. Don't miss this opportunity to have your Scotties screened with a short and painless procedure, and make a New Year's resolution to have your Scotties screened starting at 5 years of age from now on!