



Thyroid tumor resection/removal

After surgery your dog may have a soft bandage around his neck. You should avoid putting any leashes or collars around your dog's neck until they have healed from surgery, usually 10–14 days. Use a body harness for walking your pet instead. During this time period you should keep your dog's activity limited.

Follow the advice of your veterinarian/veterinary oncologist regarding medications that may be needed for your pet after surgery. If both thyroid glands are removed, your veterinarian may need to check your dog's calcium levels several times during recovery because some parathyroid tissue is removed with the thyroid glands (parathyroid glands are involved in calcium regulation).

Surgical removal of thyroid tumors has the best outcome if the mass is freely moveable, less than 4cm in size, nonmetastatic (has not spread) and can be completely removed. Long-term survival (1 to 3 years) may be achieved in dogs, depending on histologic features observed by the pathologist and early diagnosis prior to local invasion or metastatic (spreading) disease. Patients treated with surgery and follow-up I-131 treatment have an average survival of 34 months.

There are always risks associated with general anesthesia. Complications specific to removal of thyroid tumors in dogs include bleeding or damage to the recurrent laryngeal nerve, which is responsible for movement of the larynx (upper airway cartilages) during breathing and swallowing. Dogs that have both thyroid glands removed may experience low calcium (hypocalcemia) or low thyroid hormone levels (hypothyroidism) which require treatment with medication. Finally, there can be some swelling and bruising of the incision on the neck after surgery.

Stephen Van Lue, DVM, DACVS
svanlue@vanluevetsurg.com