

CANCER: Avoid carcinogens with your beloved pet

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be seen by your veterinarian. If you're worried, your veterinarian is probably worried, too. For many reasons, this is why veterinarians like to do a bi-annual exam on your furry friends. By being familiar with your animal it is easier for your veterinarian to notice the unusual, too. Remember, you can be very proactive in monitoring the health of your pet."

She added, "Regular screening, blood tests, radiographs and ultrasounds can be aids to evaluate the health of your pet. Evaluating their lumps and bumps can help determine how concerning these are. But it is important to remember even with these thorough diagnostic tools, sometimes you cannot predict when cancer will happen."

Make it a regular practice to examine your dog's body for unexplained swelling or lumps. Tumors developing in the upper layers of skin are the most common types of cancer in dogs.

Many early warning signs of cancer are more subtle.

While many of these signs — behavioral changes, loss of appetite, increased water consumption, persistent wheezing or coughing — are universal, they require basic observational skills on the part of the pet parent.

There is no magical diet, supplement, or vaccine that prevents cancer. But, as a pet parent, you can make some choices to improve the odds.

Early spaying reduces the risk of mammary cancer in females. In male dogs, testicular cancer is common; neutering eliminates that risk, and reduces the risk of both cancerous and non-cancerous prostate conditions, as well as anal cancer.

Pale-skinned dogs have a higher risk of skin cancer. An example of this risk is the Dalmatian, a breed currently high in popularity. Cancer is known to surround — but not enter — a Dalmatian's black spots. If you own a fair-skinned, short-haired breed, it's best to limit your dog's sun exposure, especially at the times of day when the sun's rays are the most direct.

There is also the territory of nutrition and environment. The less environmental toxins your dogs are exposed to the better. Long-term toxic exposure can destroy a dog's liver, and weaken the

immune system, which is the first and last line of defense against cancer.

Limiting your dog's exposure to toxins may be harder than you might think. After all, dogs spend their lives on the earth's most toxic layer, the ground, and in contact with the toxin-covered surfaces in our homes: carpets which have been cleaned with potentially harmful chemicals, floors which have been sprayed with pesticides to dispose of bugs, and garage floors which have absorbed all sorts of toxins.

Then there are all the chemicals we pour onto dogs, most notably, flea-killing chemicals of every description: powders, sprays, shampoos, dips and ointments.

"Common sense and clinical experience make a strong case for avoiding anything that exposes an animal to known carcinogens or weakens the immune system," said Stacey Hershman, DVM, a holistic house-call veterinarian in Rockland County, New York.

Just like their human companions, dogs live longer, healthier lives when they eat the right foods, get enough exercise, breathe clean air, drink clean water and stay away from harmful substances.

STRENGTH: Motivation and accountability are key to success

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a yoke carry, keg-over-bar lifts — and an exhibition car deadlift, using cars provided by Sisters competitor Christy Rungay.

The event drew competitors eager to test their mettle from all over the Pacific Northwest.

"Everybody had a blast," Hudson said.

Most folks probably don't start going to the gym figuring they're going to deadlift a small car. But you never know. You might surprise yourself. And, ultimately, that's what strength competition is all about — testing your limits and surpassing what you thought you could do. And having a blast while you're at it.

Hudson knows: "It brings the best out of them."



PHOTO PROVIDED

An exhibition car deadlift was part of the 1st Sisters Strongman Throwdown last month.

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