

Malignant lymphoma of the skin and superficial lymph nodes in a bull mastiff bitch

A 9-year-old spayed bull mastiff bitch had a long history of allergy caused and/or aggravated by flea infestation. The owner considered flea control with Program (Novartis) too expensive, and tried unsuccessfully to control the flea problem by sporadic dipping. The dog was consequently treated with prednisolone (Prednisolone tablets, Centaur) to control the severe pruritus; this had occurred from time to time since the dog was about 18 months old.

When the dog was presented with severe generalised pyoderma and enlargement of all superficial lymph nodes, it was thought that this could be the result of chronic scratching as well as immune suppression caused by the prolonged use of steroids. The dog was put on a course of Purbac (Lennon Ltd) and the owner advised to gradually reduce the dosage of prednisolone.

Re-examination 3 weeks later revealed that the skin had improved, there was no more exudation and the lymph nodes were considerably smaller. The course of Purbac treatment was extended for a further 2 weeks.

One week after the second course of Purbac the owner reported enlargement of the lymph nodes again, as well as dark, hairless patches on the skin. When the dog was presented for biopsies of the skin

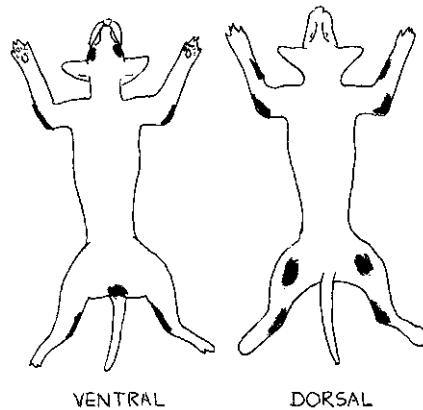


Fig. 1: Diagrammatic representation of the approximately bilaterally symmetrical distribution of lesions.

and lymph nodes, the skin lesions were bilaterally symmetrical (Figs 1–3), hairless and pigmented, with a nodular appearance that I considered to be highly suggestive of a neoplastic condition, although I had not seen a clinical case before. All the superficial lymph nodes were massively enlarged (Fig. 4).

Histology confirmed the diagnosis of neoplasia. A lymph node biopsy revealed a highly malignant lymphoma, with small

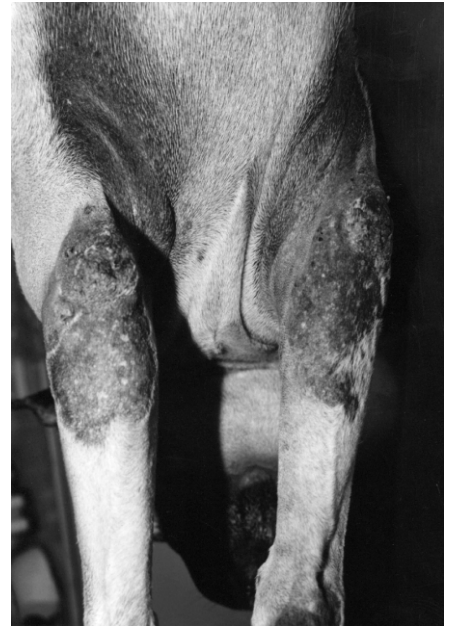


Fig. 2: Bilaterally symmetrical lesions distal to the elbows.

neoplastic lymphocytes infiltrating both the medulla and cortex and obliterating the normal architecture. The dermis was diffusely infiltrated by similar neoplastic cells, which in some areas also infiltrated the epidermis. The prognosis was hopeless and the dog was euthanased.

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Fig. 3: Pigmented, non-pruritic lesions with an irregular, nodular surface.

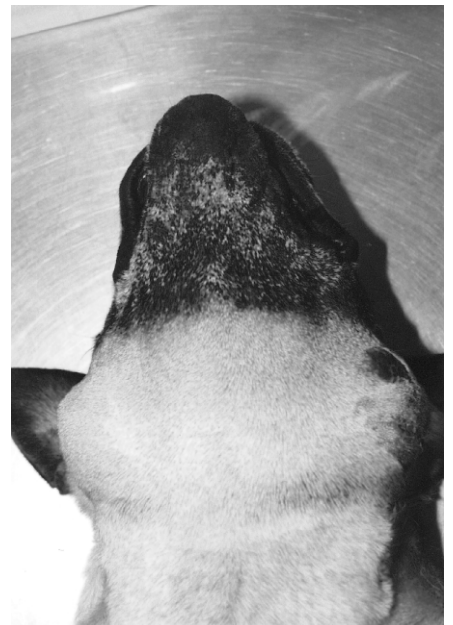


Fig. 4: Extreme enlargement of the sub-mandibular lymph nodes. All other superficial lymph nodes were similarly enlarged.