



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

MAST CELL TUMORS

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

A Guide for Fosters and Adopters on Mast Cell Tumors

A **mast cell tumor**, often called an **MCT**, is one of the most common skin cancers seen in dogs. Mast cells are normal immune-system cells that help the body respond to allergies, irritation, and inflammation. When these cells grow out of control, they can form a tumor.

In French Bulldogs, mast cell tumors may look very different from dog to dog. They can appear as a small bump, wart-like growth, soft lump under the skin, red irritated spot, swollen area, or a sore that will not heal. Some mast cell tumors stay about the same size, while others seem to grow, shrink, then grow again. This changing size happens because mast cells can release chemicals such as histamine, which causes swelling and redness.

The most important thing to know is this: **you cannot tell if a lump is harmless just by looking at it.** Any new lump on a French Bulldog should be checked by a veterinarian, especially if it is growing, changing, bleeding, red, itchy, ulcerated, or bothering the dog.

A veterinarian usually starts with a **fine needle aspirate**, often called an FNA. This is a quick test where a small needle is placed into the lump to collect cells. Those cells are examined under a microscope. If mast cells are seen, the vet may recommend surgery to remove the tumor and send it to a lab for **histopathology**, which means a pathologist studies the whole tumor tissue.

The lab report is very important. It tells the vet the **grade** of the tumor, whether the edges or “margins” are clean, and whether the tumor looks low-risk or high-risk. In general, **low-grade mast cell tumors behave less aggressively**, while **high-grade mast cell tumors are more likely to spread or come back**. Clean margins mean the surgeon appears to have removed the full tumor. Dirty or incomplete margins mean tumor cells may have been left behind.

Treatment depends on the tumor. Many low-grade mast cell tumors can do very well with complete surgical removal. More concerning tumors may need additional treatment such as a second surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, targeted medications, or referral to a veterinary oncologist.



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

MAST CELL TUMORS

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

Some dogs also need medications like antihistamines, stomach protectants, or steroids because mast cell tumors can release chemicals that irritate the stomach or cause swelling.

Warning signs that need prompt veterinary attention include a lump that suddenly gets bigger, redness or swelling around the lump, bleeding, open sores, vomiting, black/tarry stool, weakness, collapse, pale gums, loss of appetite, or signs of pain. These symptoms can happen when mast cell chemicals affect the body.

For French Bulldogs in rescue, the safest rule is: **measure it, photograph it, and have the vet check it.** Do not squeeze, scratch, or ignore suspicious lumps. Keep a record of the size, location, color, and whether the dog is licking or bothering it. Early testing and proper removal give the dog the best chance for a good outcome.

Mast cell tumors sound scary, but they are not all the same. Some are very treatable, especially when found early and removed completely. The key is not guessing. Any new or changing lump should be treated as “important until proven otherwise.”

Respectfully,
SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

Disclaimer: SoCal French Bulldog Rescue is not a substitute for a veterinarian’s review and educated opinion on any health subject presented in our Information Sharing Program. We are only relaying key information to help you and your French Bulldog you either foster or adopted from our rescue. Thank you.