ORAL TUMORS

- Dogs and cats can get both benign and malignant tumors in the mouth
- The most common benign tumor in dogs is an epulus, which grows near the teeth
- The most common malignant oral mass in dogs is malignant melanoma, which just like in humans is highly aggressive
- About half of swellings or masses in the mouth of cats are benign, usually due to bone infection secondary to periodontal disease
- Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common malignant oral tumor in cats, and is very aggressive
- Due to the high frequency of malignancy, any growth in the mouth of your pet should be investigated immediately and either biopsied or removed depending on suspicion of malignancy

Below some examples of oral masses:

Both the pictures on the left and the right are of an epulus, which is a benign oral tumor of dogs. Its origin is the periodontal ligament, which holds the teeth in their sockets. Therefore it is generally found attached to the base of a tooth. These are treated with surgical removal.

This black-pigmented irregular growth seen around the lower teeth of a dog is a malignant melanoma, a very aggressive mass. By the time it is diagnosed it often has already spread to other areas in the body. Finding these when they are very small is crucial for favorable treatment.

This is a squamous cell carcinoma on hard palate of a cat. These masses grow aggressively and are very difficult to treat.

This is a fibrosarcoma, another malignant mass, growing around the upper teeth of a cat. These masses are very slow growing and often can be successfully removed when still small.