

Important Information Regarding
YOUR PET'S RADIATION THERAPY
Treatments



RED BANK VETERINARY HOSPITAL

WHAT IS RADIATION THERAPY?

Radiation Therapy uses high energy x-rays to interrupt the reproduction of cancer cells. During this process, healthy cells in the field of treatment are also damaged. The therapeutic goal is to have the healthy cells regenerate, while inhibiting the cancer cells from multiplying. Radiation Therapy is one of the most common treatments for cancer and can be used to treat many types of it throughout the body.



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RADIATION THERAPY TEAM

Oncologist

The Oncologist is the doctor who develops the most appropriate treatment plan, prescribes those treatments, and oversees your pet's care. With an expertise in pain management and treatment of side effects, the Oncologist helps maintain your pet's quality of life throughout the treatment process.

Radiation Physicist

The Radiation Physicist is responsible for calculating the accurate delivery of the radiation dose and pattern prescribed by the Oncologist utilizing a state-of-the-art computerized three-dimensional treatment planning unit. This helps ensure that your pet is accurately treated while minimizing the amount of normal surrounding tissue being affected.

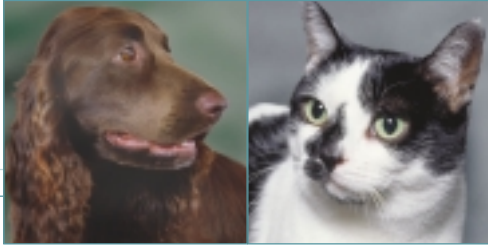
Radiation Therapist

The Radiation Therapist participates in treatment planning and delivers the radiation treatment prescribed by the Oncologist.

Veterinary Technician

The Veterinary Technician administers the anesthesia during treatment, monitors your pet's vital signs while under sedation and helps your pet to wake up comfortably following Radiation Therapy.





FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS

VERY IMPORTANT. PLEASE READ!

Every pet MUST be treated on an empty stomach. That means your pet can **NOT** have any food or water after twelve midnight the night before, unless other arrangements have been made.

This is one of the most important things that you, as a pet owner, must adhere to, without exception. It is in the best interest of your pet that you follow these instructions, otherwise, your pet may aspirate (choke) on undigested food or water while under anesthesia. This can result in your pet developing pneumonia, which is a life-threatening problem.

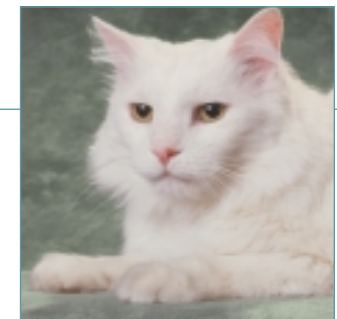
If you make a mistake and your pet has had something to eat or drink after midnight, please be honest and let the Radiation Therapist know. No one will be upset with you. We share your concern for your pet and want to do what is best. Most likely, the treatment will be cancelled for the day and it will be made up at the end of the treatment schedule. Missing a treatment will not affect your pet's ability to benefit from Radiation Therapy.

DIET

While your pet is undergoing Radiation Therapy, his/her appetite and digestion may change. Although there may be several reasons for this, it is usually due to stress brought on by being subjected to strange smells, sounds, animals, and people. These symptoms should disappear once the treatment series is complete.

If your pet experiences diarrhea during treatment and it worsens or becomes severe, your pet's diet may be changed or medication may be added to help make your pet more comfortable.

It is very important that you do NOT give food or water to your pet for at least an hour following Radiation Treatment. Due to the sedation that your pet received, his/her swallowing reflex is temporarily impaired and needs time to return to normal. Otherwise, your pet may choke. We understand that your pet may want to eat, but we promise that he/she will survive being hungry for one more hour, especially when it is in your pet's best interest.



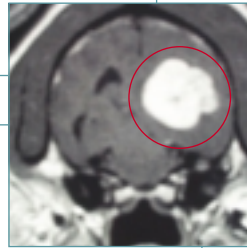
GROOMING INSTRUCTIONS

VERY IMPORTANT. PLEASE READ!

It is important to speak with the Radiation Therapist before taking your pet to be groomed. There are certain areas on your pet that should not be bathed with soap or water for long periods of time during or following Radiation Treatment.

As you will notice, your pet's fur will also be shaved to help the Radiation Therapist identify the treatment area. Once these marks are gone, it will be difficult to know where the exact treatment area was located.

Should your pet need to be groomed during radiation treatments, please consult with the Radiation Therapist beforehand.



MRI of the brain showing a tumor

IF YOUR PET IS UNDERGOING RADIATION THERAPY TO THE BRAIN:

VERY IMPORTANT. PLEASE READ!

If your pet is receiving Radiation Therapy to the brain, there may be initial swelling of the tissue after the first two or three treatments. This **may** cause seizure-like symptoms. Usually this will pass on its own after a day or two. However, if you have any questions or concerns, please call Red Bank Veterinary Hospital or your primary veterinarian. If you call your primary veterinarian, remember to tell him/her that your pet is receiving Radiation Therapy to the brain.

Generally, no treatment or medication is necessary to treat these seizure-like symptoms. However, if these symptoms continue, and depending upon their severity, the Oncologist may need to re-evaluate your pet and decide whether treatment can be continued.

APPOINTMENTS

Please try to be prompt for your pet's Radiation Therapy appointment. Tardiness infringes on the next patient's time and may mean that your pet cannot receive his/her treatment for the day. Options include leaving your pet for the day to be worked into the schedule or making up the missed treatment at the end of the treatment series.

CANCELLATIONS

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call the Radiation Therapy Department. If you must leave a voicemail, your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Should Red Bank Veterinary Hospital need to cancel your appointment, you will be notified as soon as possible by telephone. You may assume that your next day's appointment will stand as scheduled unless you are contacted again. If you would like to call the hospital to verify your appointment time, please make sure you inform the Receptionist that you are coming in for Radiation Therapy and NOT Chemotherapy.

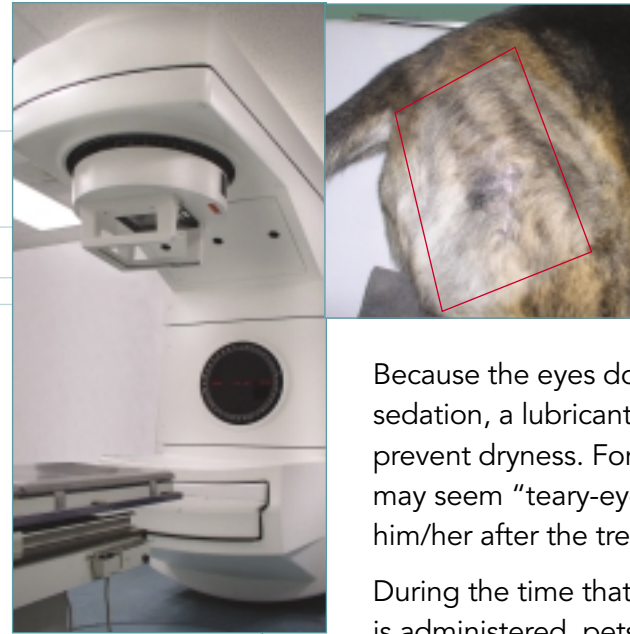


BEHIND THE SCENES: WHAT HAPPENS DURING A RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT

When you bring in your pet for a treatment, you will check in at the reception desk. Once it is your turn, a member of the Radiation Therapy team will come to get your pet. Because of the radiation involved in the treatment, you will not be allowed to accompany them.

Your pet will be taken to the treatment room and placed under general anesthesia. Anesthesia is necessary because pets are not able to stay perfectly still during treatment and targeting a very precise area is critical to your pet's Radiation Therapy. The entire treatment process is done quickly so that your pet is not asleep longer than necessary.

Dogs are sedated using a fast acting anesthetic via injection. This is followed by the insertion of a trachea tube, which delivers Isoflorane, an anesthetic gas that keeps your dog sedated for the entire procedure. Cats are not given the injection, but anesthetized with Isoflorane through a mask that is placed over the mouth and nose during the procedure. Depending on the area of treatment, it may sometimes be necessary to use a trachea tube on your cat.



Radiation Field: Treatment Area

Because the eyes do not blink during sedation, a lubricant is applied to each eye to prevent dryness. For this reason, your pet may seem "teary-eyed" when you see him/her after the treatment.

During the time that the Radiation Treatment is administered, pets are in the therapy room by themselves for a brief amount of time, continuously monitored by closed circuit TV and vital sign monitors. The Radiation Therapy machine that treats your pet is a state-of-the art linear accelerator, the same type that is used to treat humans.

Once the treatment is complete, your pet will be woken up from anesthesia. Approximately 15 minutes after your pet is fully awake, he/she can join you in the waiting room and go home.

Please be aware that the effects of the anesthesia may linger and your pet may be more sleepy than usual. This is temporary and completely normal. If you are concerned, please contact Red Bank Veterinary Hospital or your primary veterinarian.

TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS

Once your pet's Oncologist has decided that Radiation Therapy is the best option for your pet's illness, the specifics of the treatment plan will be discussed with you.

Depending on the area being treated, your pet may experience some side effects. Fortunately, animals experience fewer side effects from radiation than humans.



Area Treated	Possible Side Effects	Treatment
Abdomen, Colon, Rectal Area	Diarrhea	Medication, Diet
Eye	Dry eye, cessation of tears, cataracts, blindness	Topical Eye Medications
Nasal Cavity	Nasal discharge, possibly mixed with blood, may become dry and itchy	Aquaphor, Aloe Vera 100% Free
Throat	Coughing or occasional gagging	Will disappear in approx. two weeks following the final Radiation Treatment
Mucosal Tissue (mouth, rectum)	Redness, irritation, itchy, bleeding	Medication

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

Skin Reactions

A normal side effect of Radiation Therapy is sensitive skin. Normal reactions such as redness, peeling and oozing may worsen if subjected to products containing talc, alcohol, perfumes or unknown ingredients.

One of the best and most common applications to use on skin subjected to Radiation Therapy is an over-the-counter product called Aquaphor. This salve may be applied as needed to the affected area. Another product is Aloe Vera 100% Free, which contains no additives. Though these products are safe for your pet's skin, they should **NOT** be applied immediately before a Radiation Therapy treatment.

During the summer months, it is important to keep your pet's radiated skin out of the sun. Exposure will enhance the normal radiation reactions, which may lead to discomfort for your pet.

Gastrointestinal Upset

Vomiting is generally not an effect of the anesthesia or radiation unless your pet is being treated over the stomach. Loss of appetite is also not an effect of radiation, unless the treatment is occurring in the mouth or over the stomach.

Treatments using shallow penetrating radiation known as electrons, will not usually affect organs deep in the body. However, the use of photons, for deep penetrating radiation, especially over the stomach region, may disturb those organs, resulting in loss of appetite and/or nausea and vomiting. Please notify the Radiation Therapist before the next treatment if your pet has these symptoms so they can be stabilized with medication.

Hair Loss

Your pet may also experience a loss of fur in the area treated by radiation. Rest assured that it will grow back in approximately three to six months following the final Radiation Treatment. Although there may be a difference in the color and texture of the new fur, this is completely normal.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions regarding appointment times or side effects of Radiation Therapy, please feel free to contact the Radiation Therapist.

Questions regarding Chemotherapy should be directed to the Oncology Department.



FOLLOW-UP

Once your pet's Radiation Treatment series is complete, you will need to schedule a follow-up appointment with your pet's Oncologist. Most appointments are between two and four weeks.

If your pet is getting concurrent Chemotherapy, speak to your pet's Oncologist about when the next appointment should be scheduled.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RADIATION BILLING STATEMENT

The staff at Red Bank Veterinary Hospital understands that learning your pet has cancer can be traumatic. We also understand that the decision to proceed with Radiation Therapy for your pet may have been difficult and that emotional and financial factors were probably involved. Because of the costs involved, we want to make sure you understand the charges that will appear on your billing statement. If you have further questions, please ask the Radiation Therapist.

ONE TIME ONLY CHARGES

RT Anesthesia Simulation

The length of time that your pet is under anesthesia during their first visit is significantly longer than their regular treatment time. During the initial visit, the treatment field portals, patient positioning and treatment plan are established. Therefore, the amount of sedation needed is greater than usual. Additionally, the patient's file and treatment records are prepared at this time.

RT Simulation

When your pet arrives for the first treatment, the Oncologist must decide the proper positioning, the correct area to be treated, and the correct dose of radiation to be administered. This is performed on the radiation table, thereby, simulating an actual treatment.

RT Treatment Set-Up

The treatment set-up entails using the services of the Oncologist, the Radiation Therapist and the Veterinary Technician. It also includes the monitoring equipment attached to your pet during the procedure, the customized calculations performed for your pet, the use of the Radiation Therapy equipment, and the daily examination of your pet as a whole. These services are performed during each treatment, but only charged for once.

Should your pet require beam modification devices, they will be made at this time. These devices are custom-made metal alloy blocks that help shape the radiation beams in order to protect certain organs such as the heart, eyes and kidneys from radiation. Beam modification devices are highly specific and unique to each patient's anatomy.

RT Port Verification

Once the Oncologist has determined the area of treatment, an x-ray may be taken on the treatment table to ensure that all of the affected area containing cancer cells is included in the Radiation Treatment field.



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