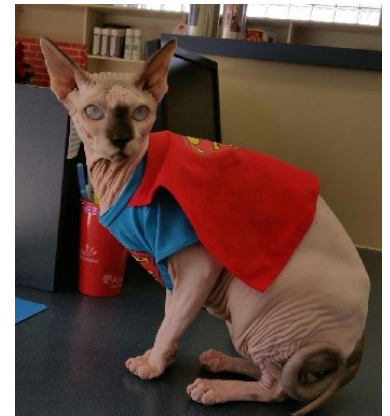


# The Hope Line

Fall 2019

## *Calluses, Cysts, Boils, and Warts: spooky looking skin growths in the aging pet*

Is Buster getting ready for Halloween or is that just a gross looking skin growth? As our patients age, they can develop all sorts of lumps and bumps of the skin. Sometimes, these are more concerning growths like mast cell tumors, soft tissue sarcomas, or melanomas. When these are diagnosed or suspected, a visit or discussion with the oncologist is in order. More frequently though, our older patients develop benign lesions of the skin often ignored or misunderstood until they become an eyesore to the owner due to size, bleeding, or rupture. There are times when these masses need to be removed or frozen before they become a clinically relevant issue and other times when they can be vigilantly monitored for significant or concerning changes.



**Skin Tags.** Skin tags, or medically termed acrochordons, are the least worrisome of all growths and appear as dangling excess skin tissue. They often appear in areas of irritation and rarely present any need for concern aside from aesthetics. Marginal excision is curative.

**Calluses.** Calluses are sometimes referred to as pressure sores and occur around bony areas, typically the elbows or hips. While preventable with soft bedding, not all southern dogs will cooperate. These can turn into abscesses or ulcers when damaged and left untreated. The easiest approach to prevent complications of a callus is to topically apply vitamin E oil to try and help repair of the skin, if needed.

**Sebaceous adenomas.** Also called sebaceous hyperplasia, these are benign growths of the oil glands (sebaceous glands) of the skin. They often appear wart-like, but there is no viral component to them so they are not true warts. Cocker Spaniels, Poodles, and Miniature Schnauzers seem to be our poster children for these hairless, lobulated white to pink growths which are often oily feeling. Marginal excision is curative and histopathology is recommended as these can sometimes be found to be sebaceous adenocarcinomas.

**Papillomas.** Often seen in younger dogs around the oral cavity, these papillomavirus related growths can occur anywhere on any aged dog. Typically, papillomas have an exophytic growth pattern and look very similar to an oral papilloma. Surgical removal is curative and these may resolve spontaneously.

**Infundibular Keratinizing Acanthomas.** These benign growths are what we often refer to simply as “intradermal cysts” due to their location within the dermis and, rarely, any obvious superficial involvement of the skin. Rupture of these masses can occur naturally or with pressure applied and results in keratinized tissue into the surrounding tissue which can incite a marked inflammatory response. Marginal excision, if needed, is curative or they may resolve on their own.

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**Trichoblastomas.** Historically, these tumors were called basal cell tumors in dogs and are most commonly seen in setters and poodles. Trichoblastomas shows differentiation to the hair germ of the developing hair follicle and usually are found on the head or neck. These are benign tumors cured with surgical removal.

**Trichoepitheliomas.** In comparison to trichoblastomas, trichoepitheliomas are benign tumors demonstrating differentiation into all segments of the hair follicle. These dermal growths can extend into the subcutaneous tissue and can have an alopecic, ulcerated surface. Their malignant counterpart, malignant trichoepitheliomas, tend to have a high mitotic rate with a high risk of metastasis.

**Pilomatrixomas.** Also related to the hair follicle, pilomatrixomas are benign tumors of matrical differentiation (arising from the matrix). These tumors are usually very well-circumscribed and feel firm due to ossification. Surgery removal is often curative. When histologically diagnosed as malignant (which is difficult for the pathologist to determine), they tend to be highly invasive and metastatic. Underlying bone involvement is a reasonable indicator of malignant behavior.

**Abscesses.** Last, and certainly not least in this Halloween season, I must mention boils! Boils are also known as furuncles and we commonly just call them abscesses. These pus filled bubbles of the skin are of course caused by bacteria. Typically, there is an underlying cause, such as allergies or a wound, which needs to be addressed to treat these along with antibiotics.

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