

## Euthanasia Was Best Answer for Dog With Hemangiosarcoma

**Once this type of tumor spreads, no treatment can halt the cancer.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. I had a beloved German Shepherd Dog, Schultz, who was 8 1/2 years old. I noticed a change in his appetite the last few weeks. It became worse each week with him not eating at dinnertime. I thought it was his food, so I started feeding him chicken and rice. Then I noticed last week he was vomiting. I saw him do this about three times last week. I also noticed that when I went outside, he was not interested in coming with me. Last Thursday, I was petting his belly and noticed a swelling under his private area. I took him to the vet who found a 16-inch long malignant tumor. There wasn't much room for his organs and the tumor was squeezing his stomach. The vet also found spots on his lungs. He had lost 8 pounds at this point.

She said that this was one of the largest and most aggressive tumors she had seen and that an operation and chemotherapy were not options. So I had two options, giving him pain killers and an anti-inflammatory with the possibility that the tumor would rupture, or to euthanize him. My husband and I decided that we did not want him to suffer so we put him to sleep. My last GSD had the same condition, but we let him suffer too long. I did not want this for Schultz. However, I still feel guilty about my decision and cannot stop crying.

A. I am sorry to hear about the loss of Schultz. You obviously cared greatly for him. You need to know that he had an untreatable condition, he was suffering, and euthanasia was the most humane decision you could make. It took a true act of love to put the alleviation of your dog's pain ahead of your need for his companionship.

He had a malignant tumor of his spleen that had already spread to his lungs, so it was inoperable. This type of tumor, known as a hemangiosarcoma, is unique to dogs and most common in German Shepherd Dogs and Golden Retrievers. Typically you will see vague signs at first, such as loss of appetite, lethargy or periods of fatigue. Over time, you may note weight loss, vomiting and pale gums.

In about 20 percent of dogs, these tumors are benign and can be removed surgically. Unfortunately, there is no way to know in advance of surgery if they are benign or malignant. However, when chest X-rays show spread of the tumor to the lungs, the mass is malignant, and there are no viable treatment options.

Alleviating your dog's suffering through humane euthanasia was the best choice since treatment would have been hopeless and he only would have gotten worse. Try to enjoy all of the great memories you have of him. Remember his spirit and heart.