

Lumps Near Dog's Jaw Cause Concern

Any bump or lump in the lymph node area needs a veterinary check.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I recently noticed that my 5-year-old American Pit Bull Terrier has two lumps on the sides of her neck right below her jaw. They are movable and don't seem to bother or hurt her. A friend told me it just sounds like fatty tissue, Could this be right?

A. Your question has raised a red flag with me. Anytime you see or feel swelling under your dog's jaw, it is possible that the lymph nodes are enlarged. Your dog's lymph nodes are an important part of her immune system. Many of her infection-fighting white cells and antibodies reside there.

Enlarged lymph nodes can be a sign of infection, but they can also be a sign of lymphoma, a type of cancer of immune tissue. There are other lymph nodes behind your dog's knees, in front of her shoulders, and in her armpits. If those are enlarged also, she may have lymphoma.

Fortunately, lymphoma is the most common, and the most treatable, cancer in dogs. A combination of drugs can effectively fight off the disease, and many dogs go on to live for years after the diagnosis.

The critical step to take right now is to get into your veterinarian to have your dog examined. A simple test with a needle can be done to determine if her lymph nodes are enlarged, and why.