

Offering Owners of Cancer-Stricken Dogs Hope

University's new treatment options for companion animals can increase quality of life.

Posted: September 30, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Veterinary care for animals stricken with cancer has developed into a vast array of treatment options to offer pet owners, and Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine has been part of a nationwide surge in the study of oncology in cats and dogs.

According to MSU, the MRI technology added within the past year and the CT scanner in place allow clinicians to diagnose cancer earlier. These technologies, along with ultrasound, can offer information about what stage a cancer is in and whether it is operable.

The veterinary college is now the only source in Mississippi for a melanoma vaccine for dogs. Still in the research phase, it is used to treat rather than prevent melanoma. Though not a cure, the vaccine can increase quality of life and lengthen life expectancy for a diagnosed pet by six months or more.

"Cancers with no treatment options today might be treatable in just two years," said Dr. Andrew Mackin, CVM ward chair in small animal medicine.

In addition, the college keeps up with the latest cancer treatment options by raising funds to obtain the equipment and personnel necessary to offer radiation therapy not yet available in Mississippi.

Dr. Kim Johnson, MSU-CVM alumna, said she is hopeful that cancer will no longer be perceived as a one-word death sentence but as a chronic disease that can one day be successfully controlled.