

Oral Cancer Vaccine Approved for Dogs

Dogs who received the oral cancer vaccine showed increased survival time, according to study.

Posted: March 27, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

The first vaccine to treat oral cancer in dogs has received approval for use in the United States.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved a conditionally-licensed vaccine by drug company Merial to treat oral melanoma. It is the first approved therapeutic vaccine for the treatment of cancer in either animals or humans, according to the company.

The USDA grants conditional licenses to new products in cases where need has been demonstrated, safety has been evaluated and where there is a reasonable expectation of efficacy. More data on safety and clinical efficacy is gathered during the conditional licensing period.

The canine melanoma vaccine, created through a partnership between Merial, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and The Animal Medical Center of New York, will be available for use by specialists practicing veterinary oncology.

Canine melanoma is an aggressive cancer of dogs and most commonly occurs in the oral cavity, nail bed, foot pad or mucocutaneous junctions. It can also occur on a dog's skin. Oral melanoma is the most common oral canine tumor.

Dogs who received the vaccine showed increased survival time, according to studies. At the conclusion of one published study of dogs in advanced stages of the disease, patients who had an estimated one to five months to live achieved a median survival time of 389 days.

"The development of this vaccine may offer oncologists a new option for treating canine melanoma patients," said Merial director of biologics research and development Tim Leard.

"Beyond surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, oncologists can also consider therapeutic vaccination, which has performed well in extending the lives of dogs with oral melanoma in initial trials," Leard said.

The canine melanoma vaccine is designed to be administered in an initial vaccination series of one 0.4 mL dose every two weeks for a total of four doses. Following the initial series, a booster dose is administered every six months.