

Diagnostic Labs For Dogs

Is it cancer? This simple question is always associated with anxiety and foreboding for humans and dogs.

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Is it cancer? This simple question is always associated with anxiety and foreboding. Just the word "cancer," in animals or humans, brings up all sorts of uncomfortable feelings, as there are so many unknowns. If an unusual collection of cells is cancerous, will it spread? Will it be isolated and just invade local tissues? Did the surgeon excise all of it? Will it return? We need accurate answers, and answers are exactly what veterinary diagnostic laboratories provide.

Since veterinary surgeons deal with tissues and organs on a "life size" scale, the pathologist working in a diagnostic laboratory, using microscopic techniques, can answer these difficult questions very accurately. Most animal hospitals have the ability to do in-house testing of blood and urine specimens for those dogs that are seriously ill, and where a rapid gathering of information is imperative. When a 6- to 24-hour return on results becomes an issue, in-house analysts can save the day. The sophistication and spectrum of such analyses continues to improve. Nevertheless, when a pathologist's interpretation is required - e.g., describing microscopic tissue samples for cancer; detecting viruses such as rabies; or when unusual or highly accurate specimen testing is required - the veterinary diagnostic lab serves dog owners well.

In recent years, veterinary medicine has seen a remarkable growth in available diagnostic labs, spurred by clients seeking high-level, quality care. One such service is Antech Diagnostics, a nationwide network of integrated veterinary diagnostic laboratories. During a recent 12-month period, Antech analyzed tissue, urine, and blood samples from more than 17,000 animal hospitals, and performed more than 20,000 tests in a day on blood samples alone. Antech Diagnostics is the largest dedicated veterinary reference laboratory in the world.

Many diagnostic labs pick up specimens at animal hospitals daily, so that timely answers are available for important medical questions. Veterinary diagnostic labs are owned and operated by private investors, university veterinary schools, state and federal governments, human hospitals with a veterinary division, and by corporations. In every veterinary pathology laboratory, licensed specialists in that field oversee the work.

Analyzing tissue specimens for abnormalities such as cancer is only one aspect of the diagnostic laboratory's duties. Skin biopsies are commonly analyzed so that the minute details of all layers of the skin can be scrutinized and compared to normal skin; armed with this information, the pathologist may make a suggestion to the vet regarding causes for microscopic abnormalities. The veterinarian is now better equipped to make a correct diagnosis, and consequently prescribe an effective treatment protocol. Essentially, any tissue or fluid in the dog's body can be evaluated at the diagnostic lab.