

Feline Cancer Awareness Spotlighted in November

Pet Cancer Awareness Month promotes early detection of cancer in cats and dogs.

Posted: November 10, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

To help celebrate its fifth annual Pet Cancer Awareness Month, Veterinary Pet Insurance has partnered with the Animal Cancer Foundation to raise funds for pet cancer research. This will include bicoastal pet cancer awareness walks in Long Beach, Calif., and Brooklyn and Manhattan, N.Y.

The Brea, Calif.-based company said that it launched the observance after noticing that cancer diagnoses often caught pet owners by surprise. Many either did not know their pets could develop cancer or underestimated the cost to treat cancerous conditions. In fact, cancer is among the most common and costly pet conditions, according to VPI.

In 2008, VPI received almost 30,000 claims for pet cancer. The company's claims data draws from a population of more than 450,000 insured pets.

The most common form of pet cancer is lymphosarcoma, which made up about a fifth of the claims. Other common forms of pet cancer included mast cell tumors, neoplasia of the spleen, neoplasia of the eyelid, osteogenic sarcoma, neoplasia of the liver, neoplasia of the thorax, neoplasia of the brain or spinal cord, fibrosarcoma and hemangiopericytoma.

Fibrosarcomas stem from connective tissues while hemangiopericytomas is a tumor generally arising on a limb. Neoplasias are defined as a growth or tumor.

To detect cancer early, VPI said pet owners should be attentive to any growing lump or sore that fails to heal, drastic changes in a pet's appetite or weight, unusually strong odors coming from a pet, discharge or bleeding from any body opening, difficulty chewing or swallowing or an unwillingness to exercise.