

Medical

Fatty Tumors

Texas A&M University Newswire

The discovery of a fatty tumor underneath your pet's skin can be disconcerting to any pet owner. Luckily, the most common fatty tumors, lipomas, are benign and usually not cause for concern.

"Lipomas are common tumors of dogs, and although the gross appearance and texture of these tumors is characteristic, they are benign tumors in most cases," said Dr. Rita Ho, veterinary intern instructor at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences.

Most lipomas feel fairly soft and movable under the skin and do not usually typically make pets uncomfortable unless they are in a location where normal movement is disrupted. Once your pet develops a lipoma, it is common for additional tumors to appear. If this does occur, each tumor should be checked individually.

"Dogs can form lipomas under any conditions, even if the dog is in good body condi-

tion," said Dr. Ho. "It is not related to any known cause or environmental factor."

Once diagnosed by a veterinarian, most lipomas do not require treatment unless the location or mass causes any inconvenience for the animal, such as located in an area that restricts any movement or causes discomfort. "In that case, we would recommend surgical excision," said Dr. Ho. Performing surgery for cosmetic reasons alone is typically not condoned.

Another sub-classification of lipomas, infiltrative lipomas, are also benign but can infiltrate locally into muscle tissue and may need to be removed in some cases. "These tumors are diagnosed by histopathology, which means you can't just look at the lipoma and call it infiltrating lipoma," said Dr. Ho. "We need advanced imaging and surgery to help us diagnose this uncommon tumor."

If, after diagnostic tests are run, it is discovered to be a

liposarcoma, however, more immediate attention and action will be necessary. Unlike lipomas and infiltrative lipomas, these rare, fatty tumors are malignant and can spread to the animal's lungs, bones, and other organs.

"Liposarcomas can be diagnosed through either cytology or histopathology," said Dr. Ho. "It really depends on the biological behavior of the tumor, and most of time they can be asymptomatic."

Since liposarcomas are malignant, and potentially can spread to other parts of the body, treatment varies greatly from that of benign lipomas.



"Usually, we recommend surgery and/or radiation treatment to control liposarcomas and some infiltrative lipomas," said Dr. Ho. "However, since these tumors are not as common, it is important to have your veterinarian check the mass out beforehand."

As with any abnormality, it is always advisable to consult your veterinarian at the first detection of any new lumps or bumps that you discover while giving Fido his daily tummy rub. Lipomas are fairly common, and though malignant liposarcomas and infiltrative lipomas are rare, it always better to be safe than sorry when it comes to our beloved pets.

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Pet Talk is a service of the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Texas A&M University. Stories can be viewed on the Web at vetmed.tamu.edu/news/pet-talk. Suggestions for future topics may be directed to editor@cvm.tamu.edu.

State News You Can Use!

IOWA

6 COOL FACTS ABOUT NORTHERN BOBWHITE QUAIL

Northern bobwhite quail were once staple gamebirds for Midwestern settlers, but changes in the Midwestern landscape threatened their populations throughout the 1900s. Read on to see how they're doing today and get more closely acquainted with Iowa's only quail: the bobwhite.

Disturbance Dependent

Bobwhites were not terribly prevalent before pioneer settlement, as they preferred disturbed habitats like recently burned grassland and weedy forest edges. However, as row crops were introduced to the Midwest, the land's regular disturbance and the new abundance of food led to enormous population booms. Bobwhite quail became a staple food source for early Midwesterners, along with prairie chickens and passenger pigeons. Bobwhites remain the primary game bird in southern states with no ring-necked pheasants.

However, the industrialization of the landscape in the last century led to greatly reduced habitat, including tighter crop rows with fewer insects and urban development, and bobwhite populations plummeted. Today, conservation efforts and habitat restorations across the Midwest have quail numbers starting to recover, and their future growth will continue to depend on the space we manage for them.

Hidey Home

Bobwhites generally like less dense cover than pheasants. These barrel-chested quail start life as bumblebee-sized chicks, and bare

ground is easier for their tiny legs to navigate. As they grow, mixed grasses and thorny thickets provide optimal hiding spots for nests and adult groups called coveys. Pheasants have larger babies and a less social nature, so they can stick to areas with denser cover, like cattails.

Bunches of Babies

Bobwhite quail can repopulate an area quickly because hens have an average of twelve eggs per clutch, and it's not uncommon for hens to raise two or three broods in the same breeding season. Some hens do this by mating with a male, laying their clutch and leaving it for him to incubate while they move on to other mates, and others simply lay another clutch after the last has hatched. When the chicks emerge, they are fully feathered and ready to move, but they're still easy prey for a wide range of predators, including chipmunks, moles, raccoons, opossums, domestic cats, foxes and raptors. To protect their young, the chicks' parents may feign injury, such as a broken wing, to such lure predators away. But after one or two short weeks of parental help, the baby bobwhites must forage and survive on their own.

Weather or Not, They Survive

Unfortunately, ground-dwelling birds like quail are particularly susceptible to declines during years of drought, when there is little food, and years of heavy flooding, which can reduce available habitat and wash away young. Their populations also suffer during harsh winters, which make it difficult for groups of adult coveys to find enough food. Still, these birds are short-lived and prolific by nature (the average lifespan of a bobwhite is only six months) and the birds that do survive are likely some of the smartest animals. These can repopulate available habitat quickly (as mentioned above), and a bad season or two is not likely to eliminate entire populations.

Covey Buddies

After breeding season, bobwhites congregate in extremely large groups, which then break up to form coveys of eight to 20 birds. These are the groups the bobwhites will stay in all winter, and this social reorganization is called a fall shuffle. The shuffle prevents different groups from becoming isolated and inbred. Individuals in a covey rely on each other for body heat and safety until the following spring. To detect threats quickly, the covey forms an outward-facing circle when resting to see a threat from any side. In early spring the coveys break up into territorial mating pairs at the Youth and Women Pheasant Hunt. The program will introduce new hunters to the sport with the emphasis on ring-necked pheasants.



Photo from the Iowa DNR

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Hunting for Habitat

In Iowa, some of the best bobwhite habitat is managed and improved through the DNR's Iowa Habitat Access Program, which allows landowners to receive assistance for creating wildlife habitat in exchange for allowing the public to hunt there. Most of the areas managed for bobwhites specifically are in the southern three tiers of Iowa counties. Thanks to this management and recent mild winters, this last year's bobwhite harvest was 165 percent greater than the 2014 harvest.

MISSOURI

MDC OFFERS WOMEN AND YOUTH PHEASANT HUNTING CLINIC FEB. 16

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is offering the opportunity for women and youth to discover upland gamebird hunting at the Youth and Women Pheasant Hunt. The program will introduce new hunters to the sport with the emphasis on ring-necked pheasants.

The program begins with a classroom clinic at the August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area classroom adjacent to the visitor center on Thursday, Feb. 16 from 6-8 p.m. Participants will then take to the field for the hunt itself, hosted at the Missouri Gun and Quail Club located in Wright City. The youth hunt will occur on Saturday, Feb. 25, and the women hunt on Saturday, March 4.

"The clinic will cover some biology, firearm handling, and how to clean the birds. We'll even give participants some recipes to help them prepare the pheasants for eating," said Bryant Hertel, MDC Busch Outdoor Education Center manager. He also added that the hunt itself would be a great way for first-timers to sample the sport of upland bird hunting.

The hunt is open to youth age 11-15 and women age 15 and up. All participants must be Hunter Education certified and have not attended the program in the past. The guided hunt is for first-time participants only. Participants must also attend the clinic to attend the hunt, and should have some familiarity with shotgun handling.

"This is an excellent chance for women and youth who want to get introduced to hunting to do it in a supportive, safe and controlled environment," Hertel said.

The clinic and hunt are both free. However, advanced registration is required by calling 636-441-4554. The August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area is located at 2360 Highway D, approximately two miles west of Highway 94 in St. Charles. For more information on upcoming events in the St. Louis area, go online at mdc.mo.gov.

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