

Splenectomy

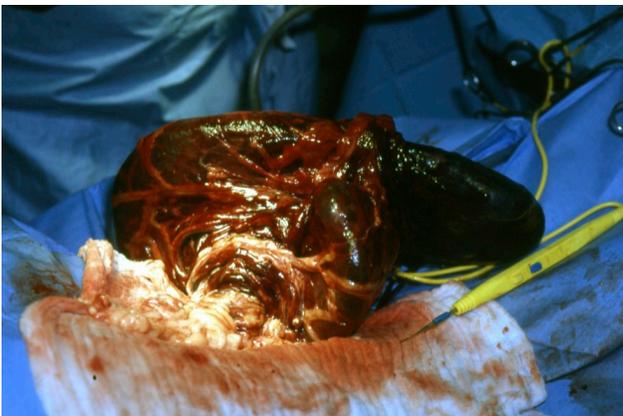
The spleen is an abdominal organ that functions as a storage site for red blood cells, filtration of blood to remove old red blood cells, and for production of antibodies.

A splenectomy is the surgical removal of the spleen. Tumors or masses involving the spleen are the most common reason why the spleen is removed. There are both benign and malignant masses that occur in the spleen. Splenic hematoma or hyperplasia are examples of benign masses. The prognosis following removal of the spleen for these benign lesions is good. The most common malignant splenic tumor is hemangiosarcoma (see below). Other tumors involving the spleen include leiomyosarcoma, fibrosarcoma, osteosarcoma, and lymphosarcoma, which all have variable prognoses. Most splenic tumors in cats are mast cell tumors.

Other reasons for splenectomy are trauma (which can cause the spleen to rupture creating an emergency situation due to the potentially massive blood loss that occurs) and treatment for immune mediate hemolytic anemia, splenic torsion or septic splenitis.

Animals with splenic problems may present with a variety of clinical signs, including weakness, lethargy, collapse, anemia, pale gums, or an enlarged or distended abdomen. Your pet may undergo abdominal and thoracic radiographs and an abdominal ultrasound to diagnosis a mass in the spleen. These can not differentiate between a benign or malignant mass unless there is obvious signs of metastasis. A splenectomy is performed and the spleen is submitted to a pathologist for review. This is the only way to diagnose if a tumor is present.

A celiotomy (abdominal exploratory) is required to perform a splenectomy. Animals can live without a spleen. The most severe complication is hemorrhage which can occur during and after a splenectomy. A blood transfusion is sometimes needed. Your pet will stay in the hospital for a few days after surgery to monitor for blood loss and cardiac arrhythmias. Your pet should have restricted activity for 3 weeks following surgery to allow the abdominal muscles to heal properly. The prognosis depends on the underlying reason for performing the splenectomy.



Splenic torsion at surgery - the spleen has twisted and the vessels are thrombosed (clotted)

Splenic Hemangiosarcoma

Splenic hemangiosarcoma is a tumor that arises within the blood vessels. It is highly malignant since it is being delivered to virtually every organ due to the blood vessels. The spleen is the most common place for this tumor to occur, but they may occur in the heart, bone, or skin. Metastasis (spread) is usually found in the lungs and liver. It is more common in dogs than in cats and usually occurs in older dogs (>8 years of age). It is common for these dogs to present with acute collapse due to tumor rupture leading to blood loss.

The prognosis for splenic hemangiosarcoma is poor without splenectomy and chemotherapy. The average survival without chemotherapy is less than 3 months. The survival rate increases to 3-6 months with chemotherapy. Some dogs with or without chemotherapy have shorter or longer survivals and the above information is based on averages.



Spleen after removal from the abdomen. A splenic hemangiosarcoma was diagnosed.