Alabama Rot: the current state of play

ALABAMA Rot or Cutaneous and Renal Glomerular Vasculopathy (CRGV) is a condition I’m not aware encountering in general practice and only recollect being briefly mentioned at college as a rare disease of greyhounds with the last confirmed case in the UK being reported back in the early 2000s. That was until three years ago when, between December 2012 and February 2013, four dogs, all from the New Forest, were referred to Anderson Moores Veterinary Specialists (AMVS) with acute kidney injury (AKI) having developed skin lesions several days earlier.

Two of these dogs were sadly euthanased due to their disease; post-mortem examination revealed thrombotic microangiopathy (TMA), a finding consistent with CRGV.

Since December 2012 there have been 56 confirmed cases of CRGV reported from all over the country and to help raise awareness, The Webinar Vet arranged for David Walker from Anderson Moores to discuss this devastating disease.

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The long-term follow-up is tailored to every patient but typically consists of combinations of serial retinal palpations, abdominal ultrasound scans, chest x-rays and CT scans, every three to six months, for the rest of the animal’s life.

Blood calcium levels are also monitored. Recurrence of hypercalcaemia is usually indicative of either tumour recurrence or significant development of metastatic disease. Repeat surgery can be considered when additional metastatic lymph nodes develop months to years after the initial surgery, especially if they lead to recurrent hypercalcaemia.

With surgery alone, survival times of about one year have been reported, which are increased by surgical removal of metastatic lymph nodes.5,6 Chemotherapy would also be expected to increase survival, but data objectively supporting its efficacy are lacking.

In a recent study of 42 cases treated by a combination of surgery and potentially chemotherapy (one case also had radiotherapy), the median survival times were 422 days and 529 days, and the disease-free intervals were 197 days and 529 days, for dogs with and without regional lymphadenopathy, respectively.7

The presence of HM was initially considered a negative prognostic factor, but this has not been confirmed by a number of more recent studies. Unsurprisingly, higher tumour stages have been repeatedly associated with poorer outcomes: the presence of a larger primary tumour (more than 10cm in diameter), regional lymphadenopathy and distant metastasis have all been associated with shorter survival times.8

In a recent study using a cut-off value of 4cm in diameter, the size of the primary tumour was not found to influence survival and disease-free interval.9

References

Figure 2. Excision of a right anal sac carcinoma, intra-operative views: a (left) – marginal dissection of the caudal aspect of the tumour; b – dissection is carried out cranially along the lateral aspect of the tumour until it can be rotated caudally, exposing the rectal wall (arrow), from which it is progressively detached by a combination of blunt and sharp dissection.