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“Sugar” - Heart Base Tumor (Chemodectoma)



Dr. Bruce Persky with “Sugar”, two weeks after surgical removal of chemodectoma

“Sugar” is an eleven year old Cockapoo that was presented to SCVH because of a persistent dry, hacking cough. The cough was completely unresponsive to treatment. Physical exam and blood work failed to produce a diagnosis. Thoracic radiographs revealed a large fist-size mass just in front of the base of the heart. A biopsy could not be done at that time. Instead, an ultrasound exam was done. The exam showed the mass was solid tissue, not fluid-filled. The only option was to try to remove this tumor from Sugar’s chest.

Drs. Bruce Persky and Marla Saltzman performed the surgery. The aortic body tumor (also called heart base tumor or chemodectoma), as it turned out to be, was intimately attached to the wall of the dorsal aorta. The tumor was meticulously dissected free from the aortic wall using sophisticated cardiovascular instrumentation. Sugar spent two days in intensive care after the surgery. The picture above is of Sugar two weeks following the surgery, ready to have her sutures removed. A 5 week post-operative follow-up revealed a normal, active patient with no signs of that nasty cough.