

FOREWORD



Experts predict that approximately half of our dogs will have cancer in their lifetimes and yet, as caretakers, most of us know little or nothing about caring for a dog with cancer. Not long ago, admittedly, there wasn't much to know. Today, however, treatment for canine cancer is nearly on a par with treatment for human cancer and there is a great deal to know.

If your dog has cancer, you're undoubtedly asking, "*What can I do?*" First, you'll see that a medical plan is decided upon and put into action. This book will help you to decide on a plan and to decide how active a role you will play in your dog's fight against cancer. You'll read about the treatment options for canine cancer and the types

of decisions that you can be involved in making right from the start. Whatever degree of involvement you choose, *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* will help you on your way.

Once a medical plan has been decided upon, you'll ask, "*What else can I do?*" Lots! Regardless of what type of medical treatment you choose (chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, an alternative therapy or no treatment at all), there is a great deal more that you can do. You'll learn how to manage symptoms and side effects, strengthen your dog's organs and bolster his system. You'll learn how to help your dog better fight the disease and better tolerate the treatment and perhaps you'll improve his odds for survival.

When Bullet was diagnosed with cancer, I wanted to know what could, might and typically does happen in such cases. I wanted to know what I should, shouldn't, could and might do to help him survive. Moreover, I wanted to know all of this right away and in plain English.

I was disheartened, finding no book that would help me understand the typical course of events, the options, the possible pitfalls, how to deal with them and what to expect—best case and worst. I set about learning all I could as quickly as I could, as many devoted and terrified cancer-dog caretakers have done in recent years. My experience as an animal writer and editor of medical literature hadn't educated me about canine cancer in any way that would be helpful to me as the caretaker of a cancer dog, but did enable me to wade through medical literature reasonably undaunted by medical lingo and to write this book.

During the first year of Bullet's cancer treatment, I consulted general practice veterinarians, veterinary oncologists, holistic vets, oncologists in human medicine and other caretakers of dogs with cancer. I read books both medical and lay to research medications, supplements, nutraceuticals, diets and clinical trials. I experimented extensively to find the regimen that would work best for both Bullet and me.

The more information I gathered and the more I understood about Bullet's condition, the more capable I felt of caring for him properly and the more my anxiety level diminished. What research didn't teach me, experience did.

Paolo Porzio, DVM, who administered Bullet's chemotherapy, urged me repeatedly to write a book that would help other caretakers of dogs with cancer allay those feelings of anxiety that come from not knowing—the very book that I had not been able to find. After a year of shrugging off Dr. Porzio's urgings, I finally resigned my position as editor-in-chief of *Catnip* magazine, a publication of Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, and set about writing this book.

For Bullet's sake, I researched and fact-checked while choosing options for his care. For your dog's sake, I did more research and fact checking while composing this book. Wherever possible, I provide the source of my data. Much of it, however, has been accumulated from undocumented sources or is based on my own experience.

The three key members of Bullet's team—his general practice veterinarian, the doctor who provided chemotherapy and the veterinary oncologist who served as our consultant—have all been kind enough to fact-check the manuscript of *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* for medical accuracy and to

ensure that, according to what is now known about canine cancer, no recommendations are made that might harm a cancer dog.

Several top-notch veterinarians and veterinary oncologists have each generously contributed to *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* information in their area of expertise or special interest. No one of these experts endorses every facet of Bullet's home-care program or every recommendation presented in this book.

As you develop a home-care regimen for your dog, discuss your plans with your veterinarian. Include any facets of Bullet's home-care program that you wish to use. Some methods that have worked well for Bullet could be contraindicated for your dog's breed or condition, the type of cancer that he has, his individual sensitivities or the medical treatment he's receiving.

I've helped many caretakers begin the bitter-sweet journey involved in living with and caring for a cancer dog. All are initially overwhelmed, as I was, by the endless list of decisions to be made. *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* doesn't contain an encyclopedic listing of treatments, supplements, dosages and diets. Rather, it presents the "short list" for each and then shares the shorter list that defines the choices I've made over the years in building a home-care program for my cancer dog.

There are a thousand ways to care for a dog with cancer and each caretaker has to choose his or her options. I offer no evidence that the care package I've designed for Bullet is responsible for his survival. Without chemotherapy, Bullet would certainly have had no chance of survival longer than the typical one-month prognosticated for dogs with untreated lymphoma. Perhaps Bullet's survival so far beyond his prognosis is due to his hardy constitution and his stubborn personality.

My hope is that every reader will come away from *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* with a plan and with confidence, prepared to begin the journey. Be creative, flexible, adventurous and careful in caring for your cancer dog. And keep the faith!

In caring for my cancer dog and in composing this book, I've taken great pains to discover those treatments and therapies that I believe to have the greatest potential for success from a variety of sources within traditional and holistic medicine.

Cancer is a fierce enemy and to "fight the good fight," we need all the ammunition we can get. *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* will provide you with a solid foundation for your battle against canine cancer. Armed with information and love, you will discover the best possible way to care for your own cancer dog.

