Canine cancer registration: yesterday, today and tomorrow

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Cancer registration is an important tool to achieve cancer control and prevention, and is widely used within human oncology. The distinction between population-based and hospital-based cancer registries is important, particularly because the latter include no information regarding the catchment area or background population at risk which then precludes the estimation of incidence. Veterinary cancer registration has a long history, but is faced with specific challenges e.g. related to representativeness of the included sample and individual animal identification. The aim of the presentation is to give an overview of the history of veterinary cancer registration, as well as to present an outline of current efforts in this field and discuss future challenges. The inventory of active registries is based on a recent workshop on canine cancer registration hosted at the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science in Oslo, Norway. Since the first population-based veterinary cancer registry was established in California in the 1960ies several others have been founded, but have mostly been short-lived. Current efforts to record cancer occurrence among companion animals are predominantly hospital- (or diagnostic laboratory-) based. Proportional measures of disease frequency can be estimated based on such registries, and the case-series have also been successfully used as a basis for case-control studies. Other important sources of information on canine cancer are presented, including: animal insurance data, tumor banks, and necropsy data. In summary, there appears to be a trade-off between quality of the diagnostic information included and representativeness regarding the background population. Future challenges are discussed and include issues relating to harmonization of diagnostic coding, defining the population-at-risk, individual animal identification and data quality.