

**TABLE 3.2****Indications for In-Clinic Versus Diagnostic Laboratory Cytologic Examination (Selected Examples)**

Cytologic Examination In-Clinic by a General Practitioner or Specialist	Cytologic Examination by a Clinical Pathologist (Typically After Initial Review by a General Practitioner or Specialist)
Clinician is confident in cytologic diagnosis (e.g., mast cell tumor)	Clinician is uncertain of malignancy or cell type
Client financial constraints	No client financial constraints
Sufficient information has been obtained to recommend and plan biopsy	No additional diagnostics are planned before instituting therapy
Aspirating a fatty mass, which may be poorly cellular	Additional tumor characterization affects treatment recommendations (e.g., benign vs malignant, cytologic grading)

**The 2026 AAHA Oncology Guidelines for Dogs and Cats are available at [aaha.org/oncology-guidelines](https://aaha.org/oncology-guidelines).**

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2025 AAHA.

