Should I biopsy this dog’s liver?

Has a hepatic mass been diagnosed (but the diagnosis is not based on cytology)?

- Yes: Have you ruled out extrahepatic diseases (e.g. pancreatitis, toxin exposure, diabetes, endocrinopathies)?
  - Yes: Is the dog of a breed with a predisposition to primary liver disease?
    - Yes: Monitor ALT and the patient’s condition.
    - No: Proceed with liver biopsy.
  - No: Do you highly suspect primary hepatic disease?
    - No: Provide supportive care for the dog.
    - Yes: Monitor ALT and the patient’s condition.
    - No: Proceed with liver biopsy.
- No: Are there multiple acquired systemic shunts?
  - Yes: Perform other diagnostic screening to rule out extrahepatic diseases—serum chemistry profile, CBC, UA, other liver function tests (e.g. bile acids and ammonia), imaging, cytology.
  - No: Wait 2 to 4 weeks and recheck ALT or other liver enzymes.

Has the dog’s ALT been persistently elevated (greater than 2X the upper limits of normal for more than 3 to 4 weeks)?

- Yes: Wait 2 to 4 weeks and recheck ALT or other liver enzymes.
- No: Has the owner authorized a liver biopsy?
  - Yes: Proceed with liver biopsy.
  - No: Provide supportive care for the dog.

Source: Jonathan Lidbury, BVMS, MRCVS, PhD, DACVIM, DECVIM