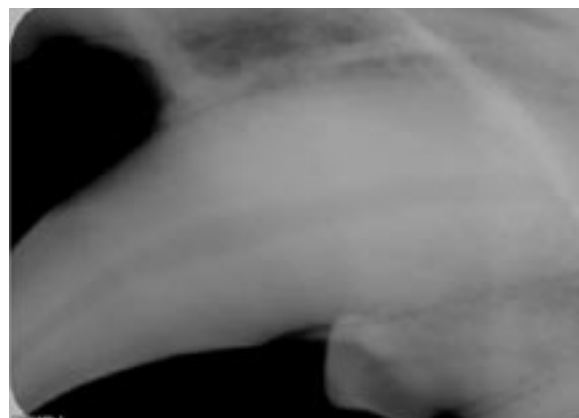
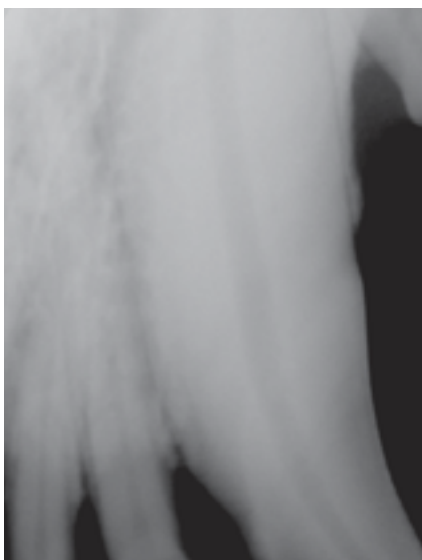


TOOTH TRAUMA AND INTERNAL RESORPTION

Teeth can be damaged by concussive forces such as direct trauma from oral play, accidents, dog biting, toys that over-challenge the crown, electrical injuries, or most commonly cage biting trauma. Cage biting trauma happens when a dog “bites” the bars of a kennel or cage and rubs the back of the tooth back and forth against the bars. Trauma to the tooth results in injury to the pulp known as pulpitis or inflammation of the pulp. The soft tissue inside the tooth is known as the pulp.

When a tooth is injured the crown may or may not be damaged, the pulp may not be exposed, and chronic trauma just like chronic arthritis can cause a low grade chronic deterioration of the pulp. Just like a closed head injury can bruise the brain, concussive force to a tooth can cause an irreversible pulpitis (severe, necrosing inflammation of the pulp inside the root canal chamber). The crown of the tooth may develop a blush indicating the blood that has leaked into the surrounding dentinal tubules. The blood is just like the bruise you develop in your skin when you are hit, bumped or traumatized the blood of the damaged soft tissues leaks into the surrounding tissue causing a “bruise”. The necrotic pulp then releases toxins and in addition, bacteria may infect the pulp especially if the tooth is fractured and the pulp exposed. The infection and toxins can result in abscesses, bone loss around the tooth, pain, and the spread of infection to adjacent teeth.

Each time your pet eats food, the bacteria from the infection in the root tip can move into the blood stream. This dissemination of bacteria may result in secondary infections or insults to the heart muscle, kidneys, pancreas, liver, lungs, gastrointestinal system or other parts of the body. For this reason, teeth that are fractured, damaged, traumatized or otherwise suspected of being non vital due to acute or chronic inflammation of the pulp, or having an exposed damaged pulp, need to be diagnosed with dental x-rays and treated with a standard root canal therapy. These teeth may also be extracted to prevent the spread of pain and infection. Extractions however are more traumatic to the patient and can be subject to severe complications. The cost of the loss of a tooth to a pet along with the cost of the change in diet, oral restrictions, and post op extraction pain management must be considered when weighing the cost of a standard root canal therapy vs. an extraction.



Radiographic Signs of Loss of Tooth Vitality

This is due to the toxins and acids that the trapped bacteria leak into the dentin walls causing them to collapse. It is very important to see a veterinarian that has experience in taking and reading dental x-rays and evaluating damaged teeth for two reasons. Necrotic teeth are very painful and the infection has a direct route into the bloodstream of your pet. Also removal of a tooth that is not dead is a premature decision that costs the pet vital teeth. Teeth are very important to our pets. They are their hands, their play companions, part of their social presentation, and their chewing baseline. Maintain the health and welfare of our pet's teeth requires regular professional evaluation and care by a veterinarian who is well versed in the recognition and treatments options for oral disease. Often time's oral pain is manifested as lethargy, gastritis, appetite changes, behavior changes, snapping at other pets, and inability to regulate or resolve other medical problems.

What if a tooth is undiagnosed but is damaged?

Undiagnosed non-vital teeth will most often abscess. Abscesses present as facial swelling, severe facial pain, and drooling, ruptured draining tracts in the face, the nose, or the mouth, or preferential chewing on the side of the mouth opposite the oral pain. Quite often if treated with antimicrobials they will improve but will never resolve without true diagnosis and treatment of the non-vital tooth. Abscesses can spread to adjacent teeth or structures in the face and infect and kill them as well. So remember if you ignore your pet's teeth they will go away and most likely take something else with them. Abscessed teeth can most of the time be successfully treated with a standard root canal therapy. After which the abscess will heal, your pet will no longer be painful, and they will return to their happy selves once again. The most common comment I hear from clients whose pets I have treated for this is that they did not know their pet was in so much pain until we relieved it and their pet returned to activities and attitudes that had been missing for quite some time. It is a good investment in a companion who invests in us owners every day.

What breaks or traumatizes teeth?

Most fractured teeth are caused by accidents, play, or by chewing on things that over challenge the crown. Tug of war games can sometimes break teeth as well. Chewing on natural or hard artificial bones, ice, cow hooves, pencil shaped compressed rawhides, or plastic toys that cannot be indented by a thumbnail can break teeth. Reviewing your pet's oral history can sometimes determine what has caused the damage to the crown. Replacing these items with non-damaging chews is recommended.

