

TOOTH RESORPTION IN DOGS AND CATS

What is tooth resorption?

Somewhat similar to a cavity in humans ▪ Extremely painful ▪ Occurs more in cats, but dogs get it too! ▪ Progressive, not preventable ▪ Extraction of the affected teeth is necessary

What is tooth resorption?

Tooth resorption has also been known as “feline odontoclastic resorptive lesion”, “FORL”, “cervical line lesion”, “neck lesion”, “cat cavities”, and others. Tooth resorption is similar in appearance to a cavity in people. However, a cavity is caused by bacterial decay starting at the surface of the tooth and extending into the structure of the tooth. In tooth resorption, the damage starts inside of the tooth and the tooth literally dissolves, eventually breaking off near the gum line, sometimes leaving painful roots exposed.

Is this painful?

YES! This is an extremely painful condition. As the structure of the tooth disintegrates, the sensitive dentin and nerve inside the tooth are exposed and the tooth is extremely sensitive to hot, cold, and air movement. In some cases the body will attempt to cover the sensitive area with gum tissue (see photo of abnormal cat to the

right). Even under full anesthesia many pets will react as if they are painful when a lesion is gently touched.

Why doesn't my pet act like it hurts?

Even though we know the lesions are painful, in many cases the pet does not appear to hurt, and the appetite is not changed. This is not surprising if we consider that in the wild, an animal who showed weakness would starve, or would become vulnerable to a predator. Therefore, they do not show outward signs of pain until it extremely severe. On the other hand, after treatment of the affected teeth, many pets will show great improvement in their attitude and overall energy level.

What causes tooth resorption?

At this time, we do not know. There are many theories that are currently under investigation. However, we do know that once an animal has developed one lesion, *(continued on back)*

Tooth Resorption: Normal Teeth vs. Affected Teeth

Normal Cat: Lower left teeth

This photo shows the normal shape of feline teeth with strong, undamaged white enamel visible. The gingiva is light pink, not inflamed, bleeding or irritated.



Normal Cat Radiograph: Lower left teeth

This radiograph of the above teeth shows the normal feline tooth structure. The edges of the teeth are smooth and regular with clear distinction between tooth and bone.



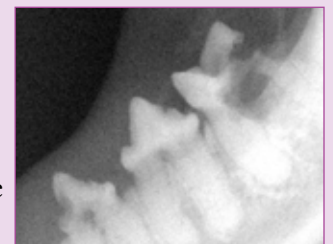
Cat with tooth resorption

The gingiva is inflamed and irregular. Parts of the teeth are missing, which can be seen where the gum is bulging up over the exposed, sensitive surface. The tooth in the middle is normal and not affected. (see radiograph below)



Radiograph of resorptive lesions

This radiograph shows how severe the destruction of the tooth structure can be. The right molar has large hole in the center. The left tooth is also affected. The tooth in the center is normal.



in most cases it will develop more lesions in other teeth. For this reason, when we find one tooth that is affected, all of the teeth are radiographed (x-rayed) to check for other problems.

What is the treatment for tooth resorption?

Unfortunately, there is no reliable treatment. Initially, fillings were attempted in very small lesions in cats. However, the damage continued to progress beneath the filling and the filling fell out, exposing the pet to severe pain again. Because this is a progressive, painful disease, extraction of the affected teeth is the recommended treatment.

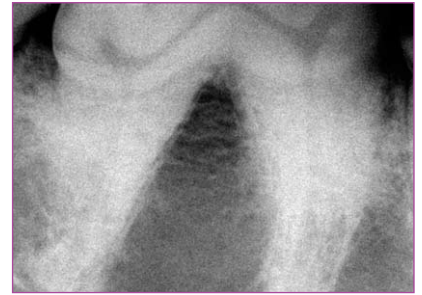
Can tooth resorption be prevented?

Until we understand the cause, there is no known way to prevent the progression. Controlling periodontal disease

will decrease inflammation, so regular dental cleanings under anesthesia are recommended. Daily tooth brushing will also keep the gingivitis and inflammation under control.

Is tooth resorption only a problem in cats?

Actually, dogs can get tooth resorption as well. The image is an x-ray of a dog with resorptive lesions. Large cats, such as lions and tigers, also have tooth resorption. The treatment recommendations are the same—the affected teeth should be removed.



About Dr. Bannon

Kris Bannon, DVM, FAVD, DAVDC received her veterinary medical degree from Texas A&M University in 1998. She worked in a small animal hospital in Santa Fe, NM for ten years before starting the first veterinary practice in New Mexico dedicated to the oral health needs of our companion animals.

In 2008, she was the first veterinarian in New Mexico to earn the title Fellow of the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry (FAVD). She became a Diplomate of the American Veterinary Dental College (DAVDC) in 2010. Both certifications are earned after years of intensive training, followed by a rigorous application process and examination. As of 2010, there are only 93 Fellows of the AVD and 115 Diplomates of the AVDC worldwide. As a Diplomate of the AVDC, Dr. Bannon became the first and only board-certified veterinary dentist in the state of New Mexico!

She was elected to serve a five year term on the Board of Directors for the American Veterinary Dental Society in 2006. In her free time, Dr. Bannon enjoys volunteering with the Peter Emily International Veterinary Dental Foundation, using her advanced dental skills to benefit disadvantaged and captive wildlife in sanctuaries across the country. Dr. Bannon enjoys teaching other

veterinarians about quality dental care, and lectures frequently within New Mexico and nationwide.

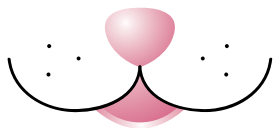
Dr. Bannon is very enthusiastic about dentistry, and wants to share with everyone the positive effects that good dental health and oral hygiene can have on the quality of life for our beloved furry friends. If you have any questions, please feel free to call, email, or just ask.

Anesthesia and Peri-operative Support

Anesthesia is required for a thorough dental examination and a safe treatment. There are always many concerns about anesthesia. However, a well-balanced anesthetic protocol can be safe and effective.

Pre-anesthetic blood work will be performed, preferably by your regular veterinarian. Individual protocols are used to provide the safest experience possible. Monitoring is performed by a dedicated assistant recording blood oxygen levels, respiratory and heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature. Local pain management is utilized to minimize any pain that your pet may feel.

Most dental procedures are performed on an outpatient basis. Follow-up is included until your pet is recovered and your goals are met. Your primary veterinarian will then take over regular veterinary care.



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