House Paws Home Veterinary Care
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Tooth Resorption in Cats

Feline tooth resorption is a condition characterized by painful lesions around the teeth and gums. It occurs in approximately 75% of domestic cats over the age of five.

Causes of Tooth Resorption

The exact cause of tooth resorption has not been identified. In many cases, cats with tooth resorptions in the past will develop them again in the future. To monitor cats with prior tooth resorptions, dental radiographs are usually advised. Monitoring will allow our veterinarian to diagnose subsequent resorptions early on and prevent or eliminate pain.

Prevention of Tooth Resorption

Because the precise cause of tooth resorption has not yet been determined, there is no proven prevention for this condition. X-rays and oral exams may ensure early diagnosis and a better prognosis for cats with a history of resorptions.

Signs & Symptoms

In the earliest stage of resorption, there appear to be small “pittings” in the tooth enamel. This stage is rarely noticed, as the cats are not yet symptomatic and will continue to lead a relatively normal life. As the issue progresses, the lesion will penetrate the pulp canal and begin to cause more pain and discomfort. Cats that are labeled “finicky eaters” should be examined for resorption. The tooth surface at the gum line may have a small area of red, inflamed tissue responding to the pain and localized infection. If you were to place a cotton-tipped applicator on the suspicious area, the cat would generally move away in pain with its jaw quivering. In the more advanced stages, affected cats are in extreme pain and may cry out when eating, chewing, or even opening their mouths. They may also exhibit decreased appetite and will often drop food from their mouths when eating. This is a progressive disease, therefore the tooth structure will weaken and eventually fracture at the gum line. After the tooth succumbs to resorption, the gum tissue will grow over the fracture site. During the latter stages of the disease, it is critical to determine the extent of tooth and tissue involvement. Treatment at these stages involve general anesthesia, dental radiographs, and tooth extraction. Some typical signs of tooth resorptions include more tartar in certain areas of the mouth, gingival (gum) inflammation, increased salivation and/or changes in food preferences. Owners will often not realize their cat was in pain until after the resorptions have been treated and their cat shows obvious signs of increased comfort, such as becoming more playful.

Your cat will likely benefit from tooth brushing daily, or a minimum of three times per week. This will also allow you to monitor your cat’s oral health. Pay special attention to the gums and note any that may be growing onto or into the tooth resorption defects. Watch for excess salivation, oral bleeding (which may be evidenced by blood around food and water bowls), gum inflammation and difficulty eating. Your cat may show an

increased preference for soft foods instead of hard kibble because of oral discomfort. When brushing your cat's teeth, look for an excess accumulation of tartar, which would suggest the cat is not chewing on that side of its mouth due to pain.

Treatment

The best treatment for tooth resorption is dental extraction. This is often a difficult procedure, however, because the teeth are fragile and may fracture during extraction. Dental X-rays are needed to extract these teeth because they help to locate any fractured root fragments. The entire tooth needs to be removed to avoid infection and other complications.

Cats with feline stomatitis (generalized inflammation of the oral cavity) often have tooth resorption as a secondary condition. To treat these cats, the entire tooth structure must be removed to eliminate immune stimulation and inflammation that is usually present.

If you have any further questions, please contact our office at 651-283-7216 or housepawsmn@gmail.com.

Source

Kressin D and Honzelka S. Tooth Resorption in Cats. Animal Dentistry and Oral Surgery Specialists *LLC*. http://www.mypetsdentist.com/feline-tooth-resorption.pml.