Feline Tooth Resorption

What is tooth resorption?

Tooth resorption is one of the most common and painful dental diseases in cats, affecting up to 75% of the domestic cat population. The entire tooth structure, including the root (under the gum line) and the crown (above the gum line) can be affected. Tooth resorption is a condition where the supporting structures of the tooth root become diseased, causing eventual destruction of the tooth. This condition is painful and needs to be treated as soon as it is recognized by you or your veterinarian. Tooth resorption can be found on any tooth. The cause of tooth resorption is unknown and therefore difficult to prevent.

How do I know if my cat has tooth resorption?

Although tooth resorption is extremely painful, many cats are good at hiding their pain, and it can go unnoticed. Here are some signs to watch for:

• Gum inflammation or bleeding

• Localized gum enlargement that is painful when touched

• Excessive salivation

• Oral pain

• Dropping food out of his/her mouth

• Refusing to eat dry, hard food

• Decreased appetite

• Pawing at his/her mouth

• Bad breath

How is my cat diagnosed with tooth resorption?

Tooth resorption can be seen during an oral examination or dental cleaning. Dental radiographs are taken to properly evaluate this condition and determine the appropriate treatment. Cats with tooth resorption may be prone to future tooth resorption and commonly may have more than one tooth affected, so full mouth dental radiographs are recommended to evaluate other teeth in the mouth.

How is tooth resorption treated?

There are two forms of treatment depending on the extent of the tooth resorption- surgical extraction of the entire tooth or crown amputation.

Biannual oral examinations are recommended for all cats with a previous diagnosis of tooth resorption. Dental radiographs should be repeated during annual dental cleanings or more frequently as determined by your veterinarian.

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