

FELINE ODONTOCLASTIC RESORPTIVE LESIONS (FORLs)



THE CAROLINAS ANIMAL HOSPITAL & DENTAL CLINIC

Feline oral resorptive lesions are one of the most painful oral afflictions in cats. Commonly called neck lesions, the proper name for them is Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions or FORLs. Visually, they are recognized as holes in the enamel and underlying dentin of the teeth. Despite extensive research, there is currently no concrete evidence regarding their cause. What we do know is that they result from cells called *odontoclasts*, normally responsible for remodeling of the tooth structure. However, with a resorptive tooth, they cause the tooth structure to dissolve. FORLs progressively destroy the tooth and are graded 1-5 regarding how severely they affect the tooth. Once the defect extends through the enamel and into the dentin (deeper layer of the tooth), the tooth experiences sensitivity and pain. These teeth require extraction in order to eliminate this pain and opportunity for continued infection. Dental radiography (xrays) is used to diagnose lesions under the gumline, to determine the extent of the lesion and to guide proper treatment. The lesions tend to occur at and just below the gumline, however it is possible for only the root structure to be affected. Approximately 60% of cats over 6 years old will have at least one lesion in their lifetime. Additionally, those that have one usually have more throughout their life. Early detection of these lesions through routine dental examinations and cleanings are essential in order to treat this painful condition.



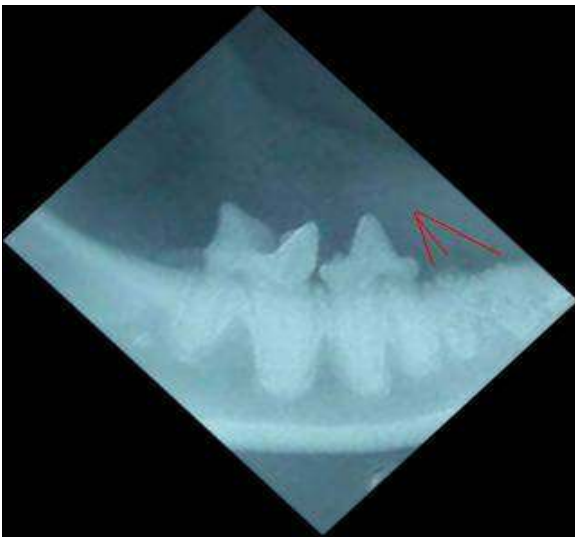
RESORPTIVE LESIONS ARE EXTREMELY PAINFUL!!!

PREVENTION:

Currently the cause of this feline affliction is not completely understood, therefore we can not make firm recommendations for its prevention. Until research provides that answer, there are a few things that may help. The first is a complete dental cleaning with xrays to evaluate the extent of the problem. Daily home care will reduce plaque build-up. Fluoride is a controversial treatment because, while application may make your cat's teeth less susceptible to this disease, it is toxic if swallowed so it is difficult to effectively use it for home-care.

DENTAL PAIN:

Interestingly, many owners of cats with neck lesions do not think their pet appears to be in pain. However, from an evolutionary standpoint, this is not surprising. If in the wild a cat displayed this illness or distress, they would likely become prey. Also, if dental pain caused them to stop eating, they would soon become so weak they would starve or be unable to hunt. Therefore, oftentimes they are stoic and carry on in pain. After treatment of dental disease and extraction of painful teeth is performed, the improvement in their attitude and demeanor can oftentimes be dramatic.



Dental x-ray of resorbed tooth (see arrows).



Dental x-ray of a painful tooth with a resorptive lesion - see eroded crown of the tooth.