

Digital Dental X-Rays for your Pet's Teeth

There is no need for your dogs and cats to suffer the pain and discomfort of untreated, broken or loose teeth or infected gums. With the help of thorough examinations and dental x-rays, these conditions can be discovered and appropriately treated. The following are signs that you may notice at home, indicating dental disease in your pet:

- Bad breath (halitosis)
- Broken tooth
- Excessive drooling
- Reluctance to eat, especially dry food
- Reluctance to play with chew toys
- Chewing with or favoring one side of the mouth
- Pawing at or rubbing the muzzle/mouth
- Bleeding from the mouth
- Loss of symmetry of the muzzle and/or lower jaw
- Swollen/drainage tracts under (or in front of) the eye
- Sudden change in behavior (aggressive or withdrawn)
- Chronic eye infections or drainage with no exact cause or cure
- Inability to open or close the mouth
- Chronic sneezing
- Discolored tooth
- Brown or grey accumulation of tartar on teeth
- Abnormal discharge from nose
- A mass/growth in the mouth

If you see any of these clinical signs, take your pet to the veterinarian, who will perform a complete oral examination and x-rays. X-rays show the inside of the tooth and the root that lies below the gum line. Did you know that when you look at your cat or dogs

teeth, you are only seeing half of the tooth? Half of the tooth is hidden from view under the gum line, making x-ray the only way of examining the full tooth.

Dental x-rays must be performed with the animal sedated or under general anesthesia (they unfortunately won't hold still with their mouth in correct position otherwise). Digital x-ray is the most efficient and highest quality, giving your pet the least amount of time under anesthesia and your vet the most information. The digital system in place at Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital is just one part of an overall evaluation process, but a crucial part. What follows are a few examples of what can be detected by full intra-oral digital x-rays but are easily missed otherwise.

The next two pictures (one below and the associated x-ray on the next page) show an abscessed canine tooth in a cat. Notice the lucency (black area) around the root of the tooth, which indicates abscess and bone remodeling. This is a painful, infected tooth, requiring extraction. This is harder to determine just by looking in the mouth.



By Dr. Elizabeth Ellis
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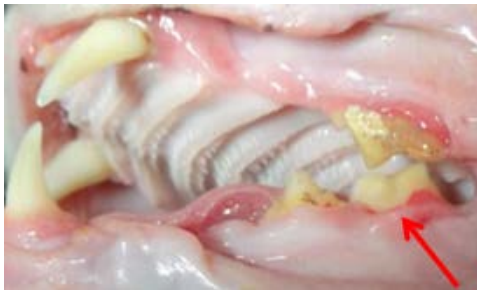
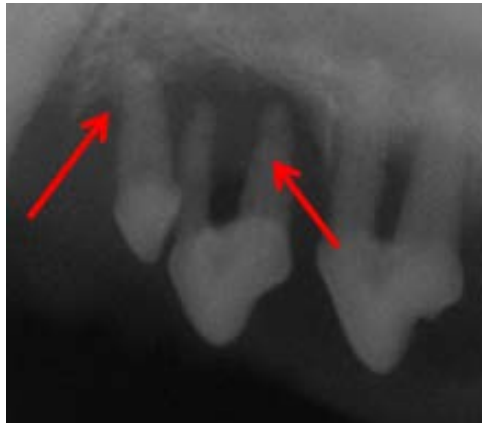
Dr. Elizabeth Ellis can be found most days at Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital in Lakeside, AZ. She is a passionate lover of animals, outdoor enthusiast, and connoisseur of great movies, popcorn and generous portions of Milk Duds.



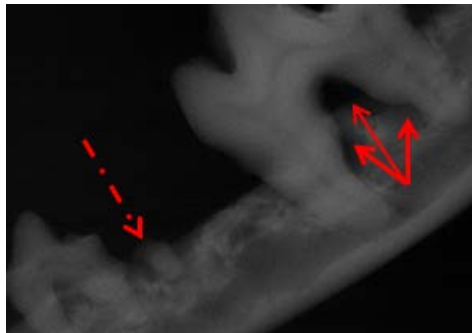
mouth exam, x-rays, and cleaning. X-rays reveal that these teeth are in fact, held in by tartar alone (not in the bone), with complete bone loss and extensive infection (large black area instead of white bone).

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Our next two photos show a feline mandibular molar with evidence of extensive resorptive lesion of crown and root with loss of periapical ligament. This tooth looks normal to the naked eye but is in fact diseased and painful, requiring extraction.



The photo below with the dashed arrow indicates a broken tooth root hiding beneath the gum line with an abscess around it. To the naked eye, this area is just gum tissue. The 3 solid arrows reveal bone loss and infection under the crown and along the roots of a dog's molar. Again, both of these would be missed without x-rays, and require treatment.



The next set of photos show teeth that are clearly full of tartar, requiring full

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Finally, the next x-ray identified a complete fracture to the bottom of the crown, disconnecting it entirely from the root of this dog's premolar.



You can now understand why full mouth digital x-rays, like those used at Aspen Ridge, are so important in your pets. In honor of national pet dental health month, take a good look in your pet's mouth and if you notice any of the previously discussed signs, take them to your veterinarian. Good oral care will preserve your pets overall health and allow you to "kiss" them daily.

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Pet owners can feel reassured about the care their pets receive at an AAHA-accredited hospital, such as Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital. Not only do we meet AAHA standards, but we go above and beyond by providing 24 hour emergency services, monthly continuing education to our entire staff, long appointment slots to spend additional time with owners and their pets, and complete multi-modal pain control for our patients. We are dedicated to offering the best care to our patients and clients, staying on the leading edge of veterinary medicine, and providing the range of services you and your pet deserve.

