

# NEW FOREST VETERINARY DENTAL SERVICE

REFERRAL VETERINARY DENTISTRY AND ORAL SURGERY

## Resorptive Lesions

Dental Resorptive Lesions (RLs), also known as *Neck Lesions* or *Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions* (ORL) is a dental disease that can be seen in several species. They are however, very common in cats. Although the process of the disease is becoming more understood, the cause of it is still not clear. The lesions are caused by the inappropriate action of cells called *Odontoclasts*, and they always start on the surface of the roots of the teeth. Eventually, the lesions may become visible on the crown of the tooth and appear as pink fleshy lesions. With time, the crown of the tooth may be lost and is a common cause of missing teeth from a cat's mouth. In humans, when the lesions appear on the crown of the teeth they become painful, and the same is thought to be true in cats. There are two types of Resorptive Lesion, and the difference between them can only be fully assessed with dental x-rays. This needs to be done as the most appropriate treatment for these is not the same.

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis of Resorptive Lesions is made by examination of the oral cavity, where a dental probe can be used to assess any lesions in the crowns of the teeth. The lesions can be hidden by accumulations of calculus or by overgrowth of the gum tissue. **Dental X-rays of the tooth roots are essential** in the formation of a management plan, as often only some of the root/roots may be affected.

### Treatment

The current recommendation for treatment of Tooth Resorption is extraction of the affected teeth. This can be extremely challenging, as the roots can often become fused to the surrounding bone. This can only be assessed with x-rays of the teeth. Although every effort should be made to fully extract these teeth, sometimes, if it is clear from the x-rays that the root of the tooth is no longer present, then the crown of the tooth may be removed and the gum sutured over the top. If this is done then the extraction site must be closely monitored for good healing, as the progression of the root resorption cannot be guaranteed and the root may still need to be extracted at a later date. The roots should only be left in when x-rays have been taken to assess the type of lesion pre-operatively, as there is no way of assessing the extent of resorption without them.



Xray of Resorptive Lesion



Pink 'fleshy' lesion on crown



Root resorption of canine tooth