

Missing Tooth

(Absent Tooth or Teeth)

Basics

OVERVIEW

- Absence of tooth or teeth due to lack of development, not lost due to trauma or extraction
- Total anodontia—means the absence of all teeth due to failure in development
- Partial anodontia—means failure in development of part of the tooth set, or dentition (synonyms include hypodontia, oligodontia—meaning some teeth missing)
- Edentulous—“without teeth”—but primarily due to tooth loss (such as with end-stage periodontal disease); not the topic of this handout
- In dogs, premolars or distal molars are the most common missing teeth
- If a deciduous (baby) tooth is missing, its permanent (adult) successor tooth will probably not develop as well
- If a permanent tooth is missing, and a baby tooth is still present, if root structure is still stable, that deciduous tooth might stay functional for a long time



GENETICS

- No genes known, though may be hereditary

SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION OF PET

Species

- Dogs
- Cats

Breed Predilections

- Small dog breeds are over-represented
- Some family line (familial) tendencies
- In some breeds (Doberman pinscher, Rottweiler) or Schutzhund trained dogs, any missing teeth may be considered a serious fault, and pre-purchase X-rays of puppies may be helpful

Predominant Sex

- None

SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES IN THE PET

Physical Examination Findings

- Tooth not present (neither crown, above the gum margin nor root, below the gum)
- Alveolar bone (socket) and gum margin at site is regular, smooth, perhaps slightly “scalloped” appearance

- No tooth structure present on X-rays

CAUSES

- Dogs and cats may have either total or partial missing teeth, is typically hereditary, may be associated with a “dysplasia” condition

RISK FACTORS

- Bilateral (both left and right) missing teeth may be indicative of a genetic or familial tendency, as opposed to a case with a single missing tooth

Treatment

HEALTH CARE

- No medical therapy

DIET

- Not applicable

SURGERY

- None indicated unless a non-erupted tooth is found on X-ray under the gum, in which case the non-erupted portion will be removed

Medications

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all-inclusive

- None needed for absent teeth

Follow-Up Care

PATIENT MONITORING

- None needed if completely missing teeth confirmed

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- None unless tooth buds/cysts are present under the gum

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Not applicable

Key Point

- With multiple missing teeth, or if missing on each side (bilaterally), there could be a familial tendency, consider removal from breeding stock