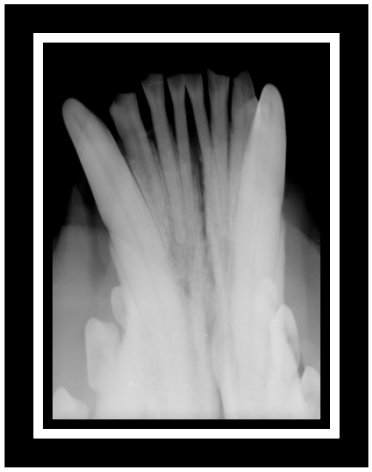
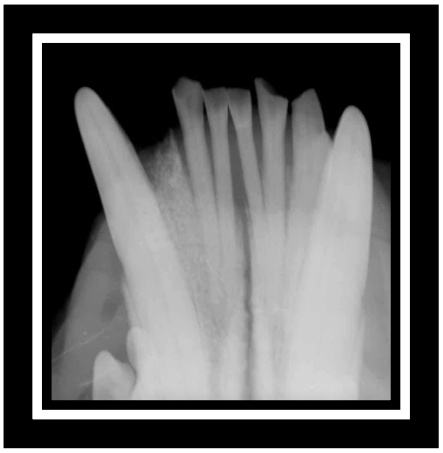
This patient presented with the following appearance associated with her mandibular incisors. As the photo depicts, the mandibular incisors have abrasions (wear) to the occlusal (chewing) surfaces and there is a brown dot in the center of five of the incisors. What is this called? The right mandibular 3rd incisor appears different. The pulp is exposed, necrotic and an explorer can easily probe this hole. The occlusal surfaces of the other teeth are smooth. If you saw this during an awake oral examination, what advice would you give this pet owner? Are diagnostics or a dental procedure warranted?

If you said that full mouth dental radiographs are essential, then you are correct! A radiograph of the mandibular incisors is below:



As you can see, the pulp canal of the right mandibular 3rd incisor (tooth #403) is much wider than the other mandibular incisors, indicating pulpal death. The treatment options for this tooth include extraction or root canal. This client opted for extraction and the post op radiograph below shows Synergy, a bone grafting material, filling the alveolus.



Post extraction of tooth #403

The remaining incisors required no additional treatment. There was no evidence of endodontic disease on the radiographs (all of the remaining pulp canals were symmetrical and there was no evidence of periapical lucency), which indicates the teeth were still vital. Slow wear of teeth causes pulp stimulation and tertiary (reparative) dentin is formed. The brown circular area on the occlusal surfaces corresponds with the receding pulp cavity. Unfortunately, if the tooth wear occurs faster than the pulp can recede, the exposed pulp leads to infection and necrosis, as it did in this patient for tooth #403. These teeth should be radiographed on an annual basis to monitor for changes.