

# WORN TEETH



**Worn lower canines (healthy) and incisors (abscessed)**



**Worn upper 4<sup>th</sup> premolar (abscessed)**

Worn teeth can also be classified as suffering from attrition or abrasion.

Attrition is the physiological or pathological wear of teeth as a result of activities such as chewing, biting, or teeth wearing against other teeth (a malocclusion could cause this).

Abrasion is the pathological wear of a tooth due to an external source or force such as aggressive brushing, chewing on hard objects, or aggressive use of dental instruments.

In instances of worn teeth with malocclusions and chewing habits involving moderately coarse objects, wear is often gradual and sometimes unnoticed

until it is significant. Few patients show outward clinical signs, even with significant wear.

Worn teeth are generally more common in dogs than it is in cats. Dogs tend to chew on hard objects and objects that create wear on the teeth (such as the felt found on tennis balls, etc). In cats, worn teeth are usually due to excessive grooming.

When teeth are worn, there is a loss of crown height of the tooth and there may or may not be pulp exposure (creating infection of the tooth). When dealing with worn teeth, it is best to perform a thorough oral exam with the patient under general anesthesia and which also includes dental x-rays. If the worn tooth is no longer living, the treatment options are surgical extraction vs. root canal therapy depending on the tooth involved. If the worn tooth is living, then a tooth sealant may be applied to the worn area of the tooth to decrease the sensitivity of the tooth (some worn teeth can be sensitive to air, changes in temperatures and can be painful for the pet. Sealing these teeth helps decrease the pain). When the teeth wear, a gradual process occurs where tertiary dentin is produced. When this occurs a brown spot is apparent on the center of the tooth. This may be confused for exposed pulp.