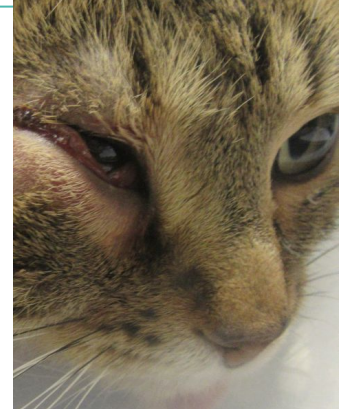


Client Education Series:



Facial Swellings in Dogs and Cats



Animal Dental Clinic of Pittsburgh
Krista Mendoza, DVM, DAVDC



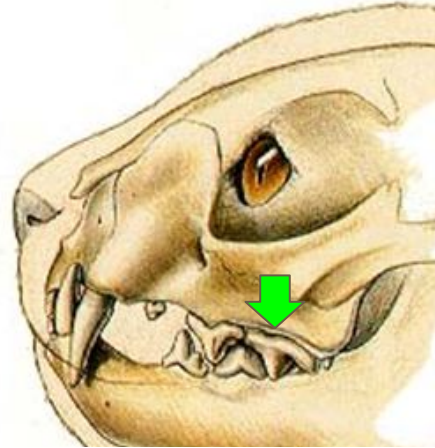
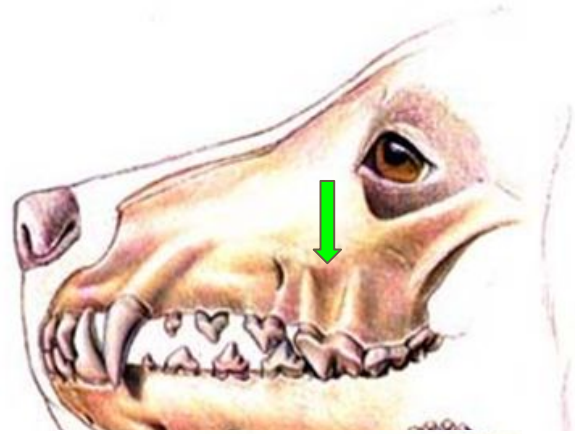
The most common cause of facial swellings in dogs and cats is a tooth root abscess.

The upper fourth premolar tooth is most commonly associated with facial swellings.

Any tooth can cause a swelling or draining tract.

Diseased teeth causing the abscess are usually fractured, but can also have wear, discoloration, severe periodontal disease (heavy tartar, gum recession, etc), or appear normal.

Infection comes from disease inside the tooth (endodontic) or around the tooth (periodontal).



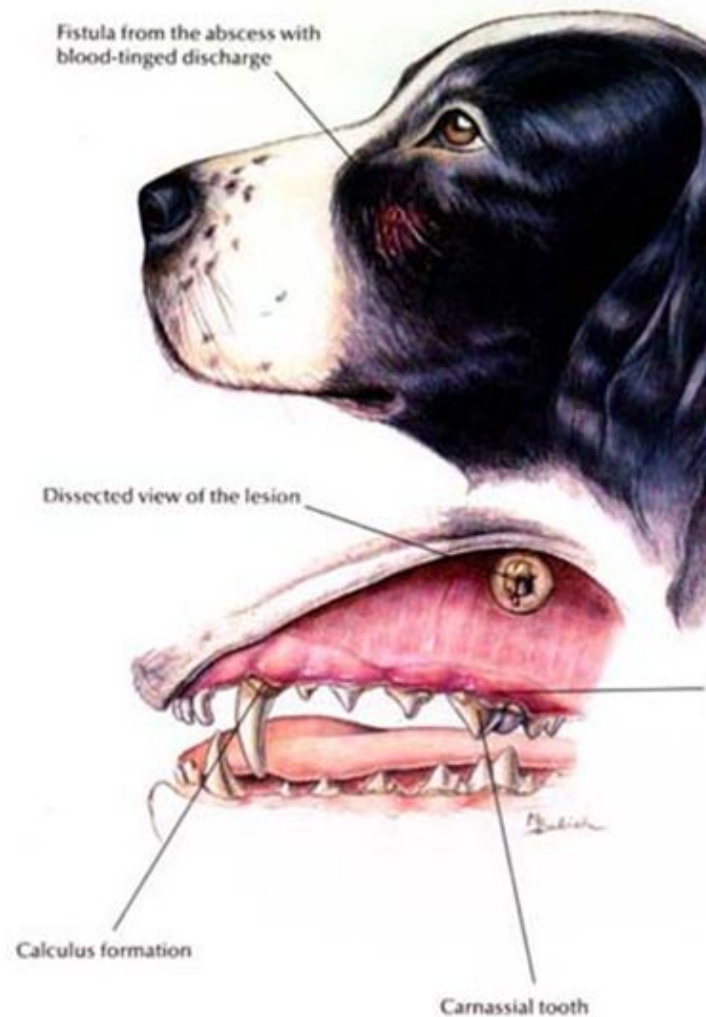
Carnassial Tooth Abscess

Appears as a sudden onset of facial swelling below the eye

Improvement on antibiotics is usually seen

May have draining tracts on the face or inside the mouth in the gingiva (gum)

Infection in or around the tooth builds up over time and works its way up the roots, thru the bone, and causes the face swelling.

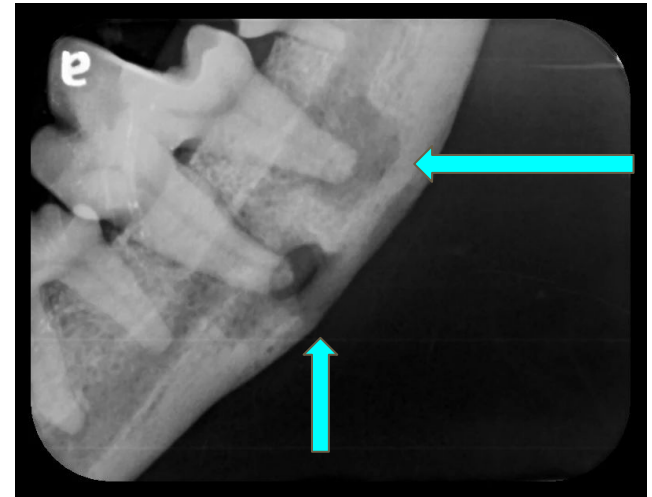
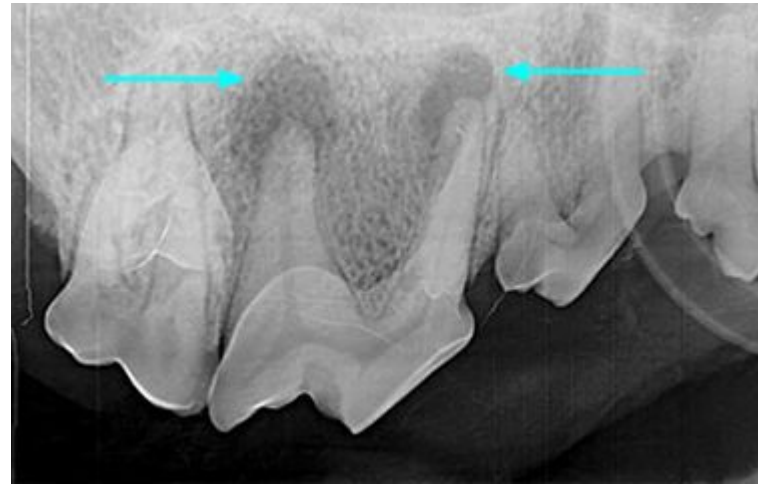


Diagnosis and Treatment of Tooth Root Abscess

Diagnosis is made with dental radiographs and probing during examination under general anesthesia. Bone is white on dental x-rays, and where bone is missing it looks gray or black. Infection erodes the bone and causes “halos of infection” around the roots.

Treatment is root canal or extraction. Antibiotics will help treat initially, but there is concern the infection will return if the cause (the tooth) is not removed.

I advise extraction once there is facial swelling to improve odds of resolution and avoid potential ongoing problems.





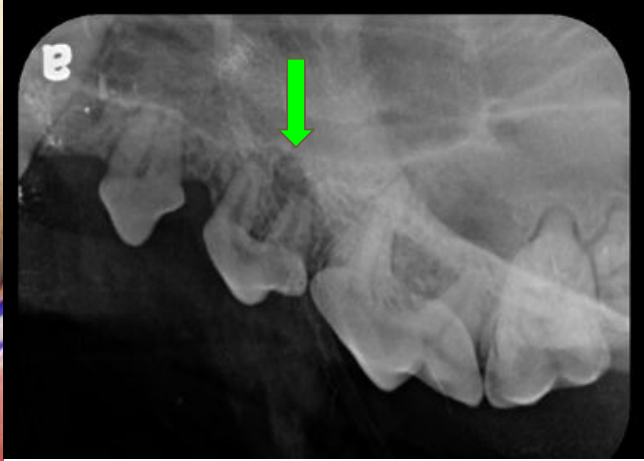
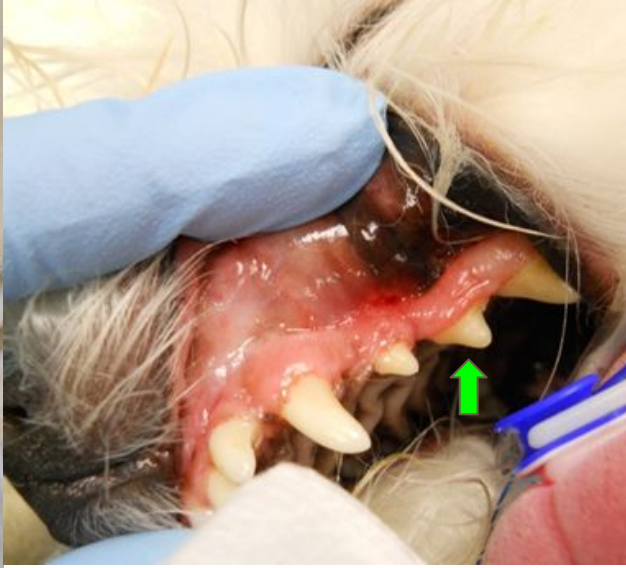
Mandibular (Lower Jaw) Swelling with draining tracts in the mouth



Facial Draining Tract in a Cat with a fractured upper canine tooth



Facial Swelling and Draining Tract from a discolored upper canine tooth



Facial Swelling and Draining Tract over the upper third premolar

Other Possible Causes of Facial Swelling (not a complete list)

****Tumors** - typically do not respond to antibiotics unless there is secondary infection, sometimes can see an oral mass, continue to grow over time, more common in older animals

Allergic Reactions - bee stings/spider bites, drug reactions: respond to steroids, benadryl

Cysts - feel more fluid like, less firm: possible slight response with antibiotics if secondary infection but fluid would still be present unless the cyst ruptures

Trauma from various causes

Fungal Infections - more unusual in our area of PA

Eye Problems - eye itself or nasolacrimal duct that extends from the corner of the eye along the muzzle to the nose

Facial Lymph Node Enlargement - there are a few, small lymph nodes in the muzzle

Foreign Body - plant or other foreign material can migrate into body tissue and cause swellings, draining tracts or other reactions