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Dental Disease – Feline Oral Resorptive Lesions

What is a feline oral resorptive lesion?

One of the more common oral abnormalities seen in veterinary practice is the *feline oral resorptive lesion* (FORL). Feline oral resorptive lesions have also been called cavities, caries, cervical neck lesions, external or internal root resorptions, and cervical line erosions. FORLs are usually found on the outside surface of the tooth where the gum meets the tooth surface. Although the premolars of the lower jaw are commonly affected, lesions can be found on any tooth. A majority of the cats diagnosed with FORL are over four years of age.

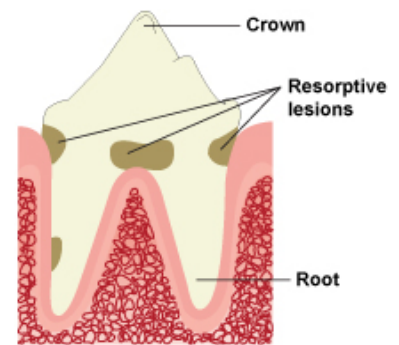


What causes feline oral resorptive lesions?

The exact cause is unknown, but research suggests a correlation between problems with calcium metabolism, chronic calicivirus infections, or an autoimmune response. Whatever the underlying cause, the end result is loss of enamel on the affected tooth, through a process of resorption.

How do I know if my cat has a feline oral resorptive lesion?

The resorptive lesion erodes into the sensitive underlying dentin, causing a cat to experience pain, manifested as muscular spasms or trembling of the jaw whenever the lesion is touched. Cats with FORLs may show increased salivation, oral bleeding, or difficulty eating. Most cats show their owners no signs of pain when they have FORL's. Often, only a good oral exam by your veterinarian will reveal a problem. The lesions can often be observed on close examination or when a cat is undergoing a dental cleaning and polishing. In some cases, the FORL will be covered with inflamed gum tissues.



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How are feline oral resorptive lesions treated?

Unfortunately, a good treatment for FORL's has not been found. Fillings (some of which were developed to slowly release fluoride into the surrounding tissue) have been tried, but found to be ineffective. Usually the kindest treatment for cats with FORL's is to remove the affected tooth.

Regular dental cleanings by your veterinarian and dental home care can help prevent FORL's.

FORLs are a common condition affecting 10% of the cats that we see. They require vigilance and, often, aggressive treatment to reduce the cat's pain and discomfort. Your veterinarian will outline a treatment plan that will minimize pain and suffering.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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