

What Is Root Canal Therapy?

Root canal therapy treats teeth with damaged or dead pulp—the soft tissue inside the tooth containing nerves and blood vessels.

In dogs and cats, pulp damage often results from trauma, such as chewing hard objects (bones, antlers, stones) or accidents that fracture teeth. Damaged pulp can become infected, leading to abscesses, swelling, and chronic pain.

Damaged or broken teeth were traditionally extracted to prevent pain, especially the commonly affected canine and carnassial teeth—large, structurally important teeth used for chewing and playing.

Root canal therapy, instead of removing the tooth, allows us to preserve the crown, (the visible part of the tooth), meaning the animal can retain some tooth structure and function.

In this guide you will find:

What is Root Canal Therapy?

Why Choose Root Canal Therapy Over Extraction?

How Is the Procedure Performed?

Recovery

Outcomes and summary



WHY CHOOSE ROOT CANAL THERAPY OVER EXTRACTION?

THERE ARE SEVERAL BENEFITS TO KEEPING A TOOTH THROUGH ROOT CANAL THERAPY, RATHER THAN PERMANENTLY LOSING THE TOOTH TO EXTRACTION:

1

Preserves function: Large teeth, such as canines and carnassials, are important for chewing, gripping, and carrying objects. Preserving them helps maintain your dog's normal behaviour and comfort.

2

Less trauma to surrounding tissues: Extraction of large teeth is more invasive and may require cutting bone or stitches. Root canal therapy is generally less traumatic and allows for quicker healing.

3

Maintains jaw strength and alignment: Keeping key teeth in place supports the integrity of the jawbone and can prevent future dental issues.

IN MANY CASES, ROOT CANAL THERAPY IS THE BEST WAY TO KEEP A DAMAGED BUT OTHERWISE HEALTHY TOOTH FUNCTIONAL.

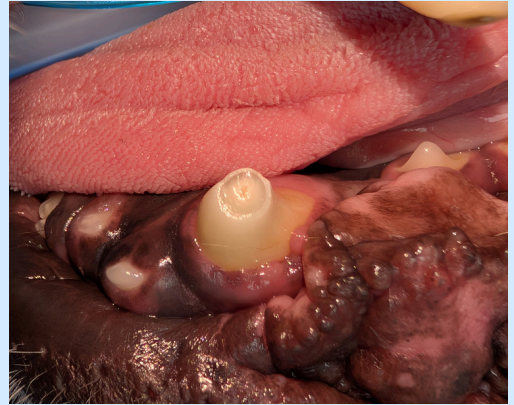


HOW IS THE PROCEDURE PERFORMED?

Root canal therapy in dogs is similar to the procedure in humans, although it is performed under general anaesthesia for your pet's comfort and safety.

STEP ONE: ACCESSING THE PULP

A small opening is made in the top of the tooth to access the damaged pulp tissue.



STEP TWO: CLEANING & SHAPING THE CANAL

The infected or dead tissue is removed, and the root canal is cleaned and shaped using specialised instruments, and then the canal is sterilised.



STEP THREE: FILLING THE CANAL

The empty space is filled with a sterile, rubber-based material to prevent future infection.





STEP FOUR: SEALING THE TOOTH

A filling is placed in the opening, and in many cases, the tooth is covered with a crown to add strength and protection.

RECOVERY

Most dogs recover very quickly after the procedure and return to normal eating and play within a few days.

It is recommended that animals who have had root canal therapy avoid hard chews and toys, in order to protect the restoration. A tooth which has had root canal therapy is never going to be as strong as the original tooth.



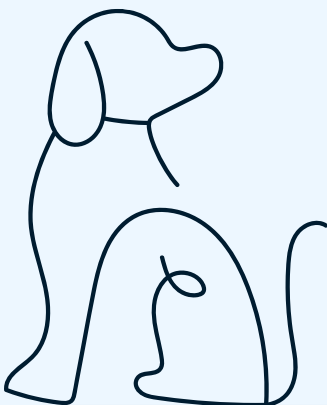
OUTCOMES AND SUMMARY

Root canal therapy in dogs has demonstrated high success rates. A 2022 study evaluating 281 teeth in 204 dogs reported a 96% success rate. It is important to remember however that every animal and every tooth is unique. It is vital that a treated tooth is reassessed 6 months afterwards, and potentially again in 12-18 months.

In Summary:

Root canal therapy offers a safe, effective, and a less invasive alternative to extraction for damaged teeth in dogs. It helps preserve your pet's comfort, function, and quality of life.

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Thank you for reading!



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