

CHARTER REFERRALS

Tooth Salvage

A common injury of younger dogs and cats is tooth fracture and a large proportion of these will be 'complicated.' This means that the fleshy sensitive pulp inside the tooth will be exposed to all the bacteria of the mouth. Pulp is generally happy when it is protected by the hard enamel and dentine around it but once exposed, without emergency treatment, that pulp will become infected and die. Anyone who has experienced this firsthand will know how painful this is. We'll look at two dogs, Stuart and Cleo, who fractured their canines and how we helped them to keep their teeth.



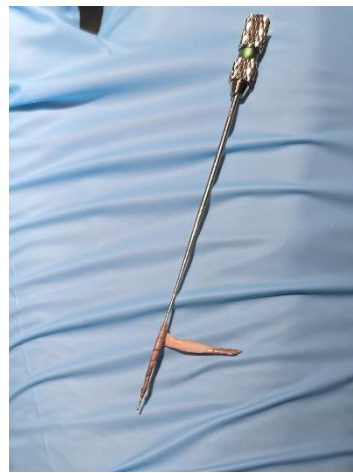
(a freshly exposed pulp will still be pink or red as seen with Cleo's fractured lower canine)

Pulp exposure always needs treatment. Traditionally, in the veterinary world, teeth with these injuries were extracted but there are now a few vets around the UK who salvage such teeth. Extraction is a valid treatment option but when it comes to larger teeth like a canine, the extraction of an otherwise healthy tooth is a significant act of surgery. These teeth have very large roots and have a crown to root ratio of around 1:2. They are very well designed not to part company with the jawbone they are anchored in and it's not a quick and easy job. I always tell clients that if there was a human equivalent tooth, this is not something that would be done in the dentist chair, you'd be in the hospital with the maxillofacial surgeons. Extraction leaves a reasonably large wound to look after in recovery and healing isn't always straightforward. Jaw fracture is also a documented complication of these extractions. **The salvage options allow dogs to keep a more functional tooth but far more importantly from my point of view, they allow us to sidestep the surgical trauma.**

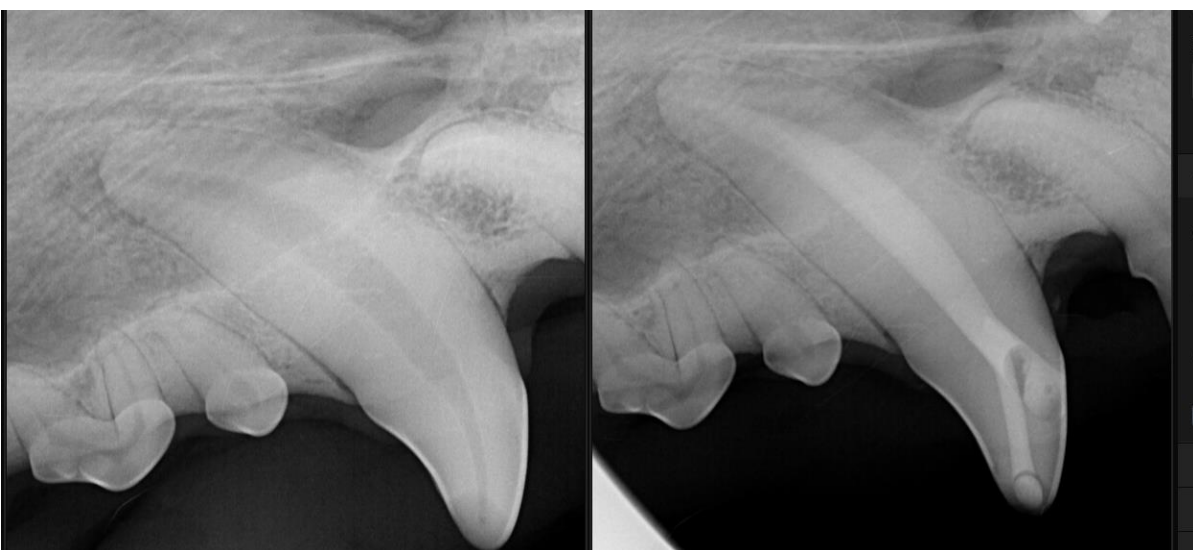
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Root Canal Treatments – Stuart

Stuart is a well-loved, handsome young labrador whose own vets in Exeter had noticed a fractured upper right canine. He was referred to Charter Vets for advanced dentistry since his owners were keen to preserve the tooth. Just the tip of the canine had been lost but it was enough to expose the pulp. The subtle nature of the fracture meant the pulp had been exposed for some time before diagnosis and Stuart had a well-established infection of his pulp which was dead and extremely foul smelling. There were no obvious outward signs, but he must have been suffering pain.



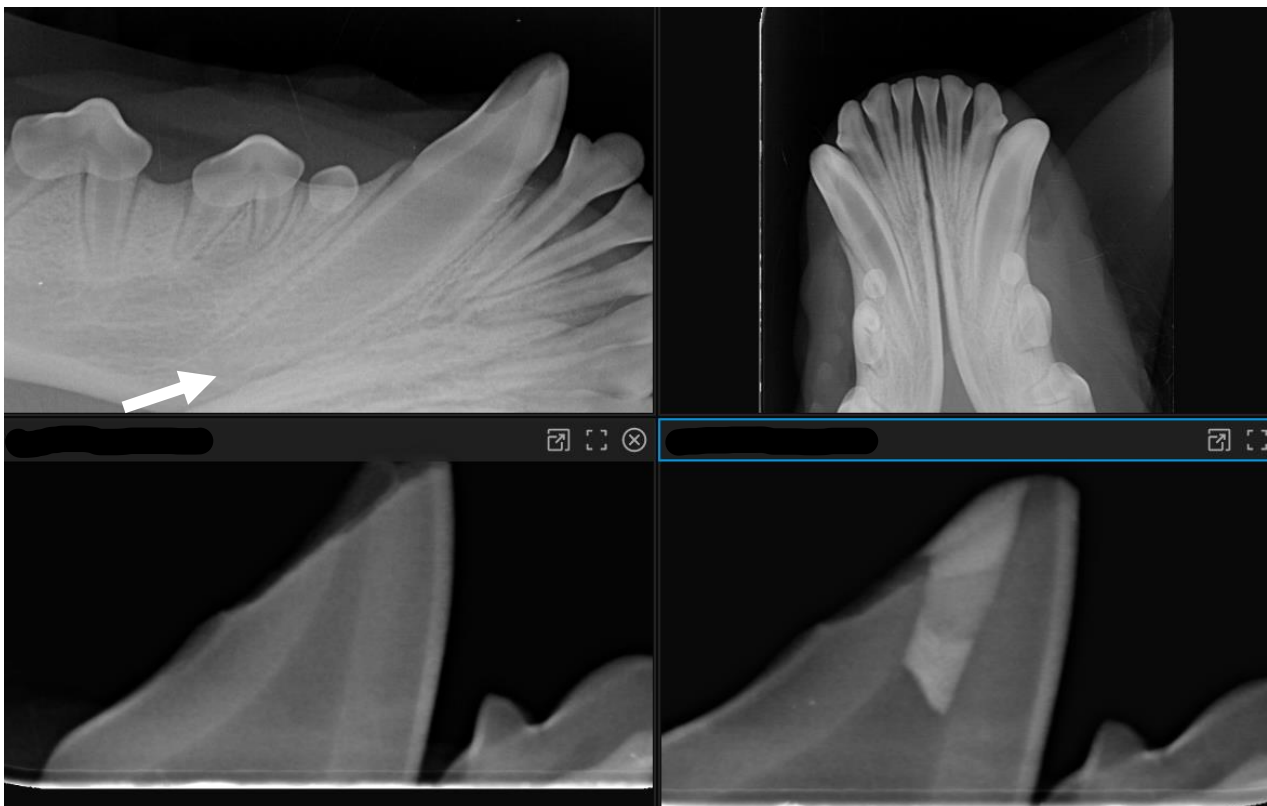
Stuart's x-rays showed bone loss around the root tip due to infection. After the stinking pulp was removed (*photo above and right*), the root canal was filled with a disinfectant to address the infection and then at a second sitting, the permanent filling was placed. This root canal treatment and restorative work should last Stuart a lifetime.



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Vital Pulp Treatment – Cleo

Cleo is a gorgeous 10-month-old crossbreed who fractured a lower right canine (see *photo on page 1*). This fracture was noted promptly which was very fortunate for Cleo because the only salvage option for adolescent dogs is very time sensitive. Dogs look to have a fully formed, mature, adult tooth when it finishes eruption at 7-9 months. However, beneath the gum line, the tooth root is very immature. The tip of the root has not yet developed and is still 'open' (see *white arrow below*) and thus standard root canal treatments are not an option. The only way to salvage these teeth is to cap the pulp with a carefully placed, layered restoration. If this is done within a few days of exposure, the pulp has a very good chance of surviving.



“She was back to her full energy self the next day and had a great appetite that evening. It was a better recovery than we could have wished for. Her tooth looks fantastic, and she is back to full teenage puppy mode.”