



McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

Root Canal Surgery

"Bindi" a 4 year old Black Labrador presented to me because of excess salivation pouring out the right side of her mouth. Immediately I thought bee-sting or a piece of bone or stick was stuck in her mouth.

She was still eating, playing and exercising normally. On oral examination I noticed two of her upper teeth (carnassials) has slab fractures present. This can occur from persistent chewing on hard things and involves a large amount of enamel that has fractured off the side of the tooth. The right carnassial had exposed pulp and was very sore to touch, whereas the left carnassial had no exposure of pulp and looked like an old injury. Bindi was discharged with pain relief and anti-inflammatory medications. I thoroughly discussed the surgical options – removing the right carnassial as opposed to saving the tooth via Root Canal Surgery. Bindi's owners had pet insurance so wanted to save the tooth.

We contacted a registered Veterinary dentist from the North Island and asked him if he could perform the surgery at our Practice. Our new dental vet Janine closely watched the procedure. In time with experience, Janine will be performing these surgeries. Bindi's mouth was radiographed and it was established that the 3 roots of the right carnassial were not infected and looked healthy, meaning the tooth could be saved. A root canal involves removing diseased or necrotic pulp and achieving a tight seal at the apex to preserve the tooth from getting infected. It involves



accessing the pulp canal, cleaning and shaping the canal then filling the canal before restoring the crown and tooth root surface.

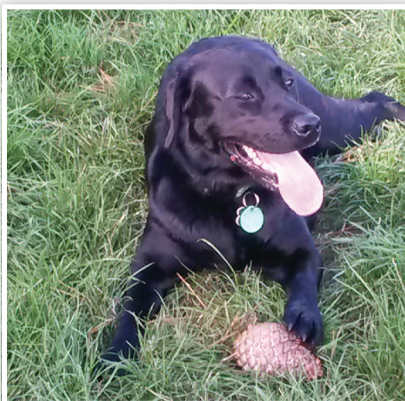
It is a long, intricate procedure which can't be rushed. Bindi was under anaesthetic for 5 hours in total so obviously you need a healthy patient free of internal, systemic disease and a very dedicated, skilled anaesthetist who keeps up regular monitoring for 5 hours. You also need owners who understand the procedure and are



committed to dental homecare. Follow up radiographs need to be performed at 6 and 12 months even if the patient seems fine. If done correctly, root canal surgery is highly successful and less traumatic than removal of a major tooth. Bindi can go back to her premium dry food diet although chewing bones (raw or nylabones) is strongly discouraged through fear of reinjuring the tooth.

While Bindi was asleep the rest of her teeth were scaled and polished the left side carnassial slab fracture was repaired by placing a sealant over the tooth, protecting the non exposed pulp canal. She was a true star under the anaesthetic and woke up amazing quickly. She has 7 days of antibiotics post surgery and a few days of pain relief. Her recovery will be fast.

Again this highlights the importance of pet insurance and asking the right questions to make sure you get the cover you want. When you start getting into specialized surgery, the costs can be quite high. Having pet insurance can be the difference between your pet losing a major tooth or root canal surgery to save it, which ultimately for your pet is the best option long-term, especially in a young animal. Veterinary Medicine has come a long way and there are highly, specialised veterinarians performing specialist surgeries. Seek out the best options for your pet by asking the right questions. They deserve the same rights and chances as us!



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