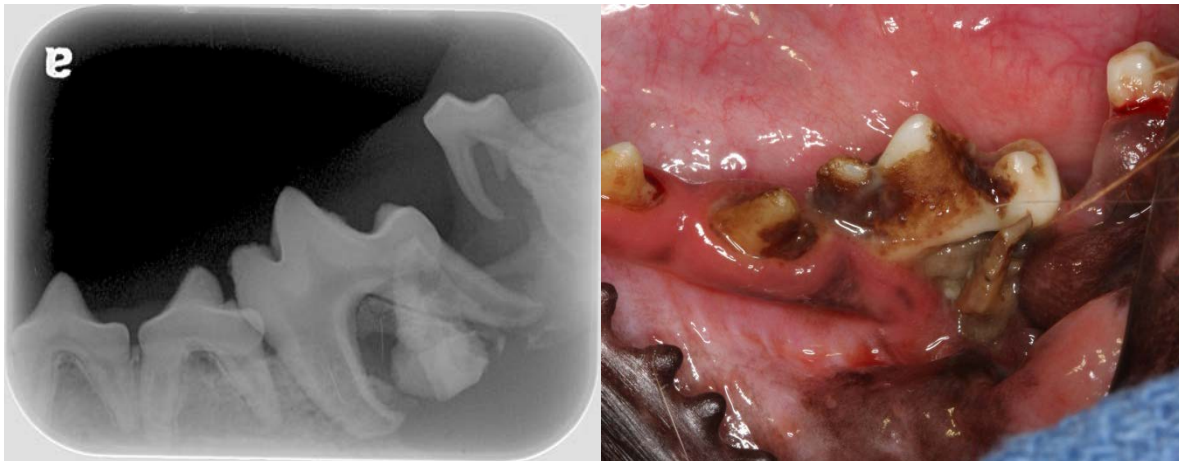




## Jaw Fractures

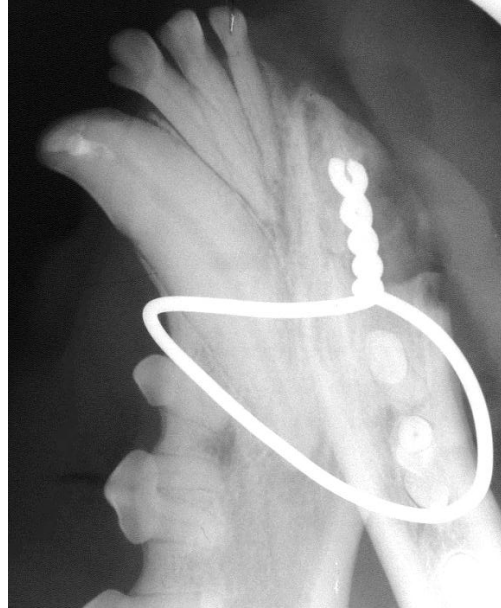
What is a jaw fracture? This is when one of the bones of the upper or lower jaw breaks. Most commonly the lower jaw (the mandible) is broken, though the upper jaw (maxilla) and other bones of the face and orbit (eye socket) can be broken as well. Depending on the nature of the injury, multiple bones may be involved. Causes of jaw fractures can include trauma- such as fighting with another animal, being hit by a car or falling out of a window. Sometimes we see pathologic jaw fractures (due to disease rather than trauma) as a result of very severe periodontal disease or tumor (see our website for more information on what periodontal disease is, and how to treat it). Regardless of the cause, jaw fractures are painful, and require careful treatment planning in order to successfully treat the broken bone.



The main goal of the Sacramento Veterinary Dentistry Services doctors is to give your pet the **best possible quality of life**. This means that we are always looking for the best, least invasive and most effective treatments. In terms of repairing a broken jaw, this would ideally mean using a non-invasive technique to repair the broken jaw that allows our patients to return to normal activities as soon as possible. There are many different repair techniques, and we will choose the best technique based on the dental x-ray images and overall oral condition of your pet. In most cases, this will involve wires and an intraoral splint made of plastic that binds to the teeth to immobilize the fracture and allow the bones to heal. Sometimes we may use plates to brace the fragments of the bone together. Ultimately, treatment is individualized based on the patient and the type of fracture present.



Jaw fractures can be repaired non-invasively using an intraoral splint (on the left) or using wires and other methods (on the right).



Depending on the nature of the broken jaw, we may also need to address other injuries to the teeth and oral soft tissues, or periodontal disease affecting other teeth in order to have proper healing of the jaw. This may be performed at the first treatment visit, or there may need to be other work performed at the time the splint is removed or later on in the healing process. At the end of the treatment, the teeth should be in **normal occlusion** (they should fit together properly to form a normal bite).

Healing times can vary from patient to patient. In puppies and kittens, jaw fractures tend to heal very quickly – sometimes in 2 to 4 weeks. As our patients get old, healing tends to take a little longer, but is usually somewhere between 6 to 8 weeks until their splint or wire can be removed. We often have regular recheck appointments during the healing period. At the end of the healing period, we remove any splints or wires that were in place and recheck occlusion and healing under anesthesia with dental x-rays.