



Oronasal Fistula Repair

An Oronasal fistula is an abnormal opening between the nasal cavity and the oral cavity. Normally these two cavities are completely separated by the hard and soft palate (roof of the mouth) and the bone that surrounds the teeth (maxilla). This prevents food and oral bacteria from entering the nose, causing inflammation and infection also known as sinusitis. If this opening is not corrected, the most likely symptoms you will see in your pet are chronic sneezing, nasal discharge, possible reverse sneezing, and chronic reduced energy and appetite due to the pain and inflammation associated with this condition.

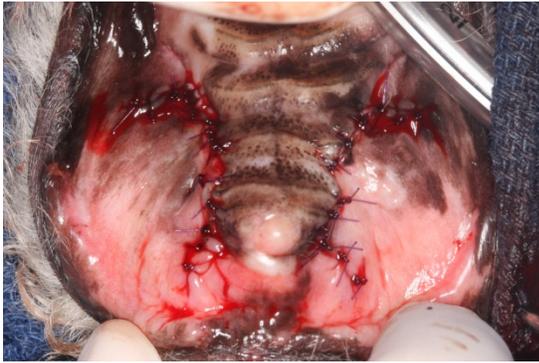


Oronasal fistulas develop when a hole is created between the oral cavity and the nasal cavity from trauma (after being hit by a car, attacked by another animal), from abnormal position of the teeth on the lower jaw hitting the roof of the mouth, or from poor healing after an extraction. The most common reason for oronasal fistulae to develop is from chronic periodontal disease that leads to such bad inflammation that the bone around the teeth is eroded away, leaving a hole into the nose where the root of the tooth sits. For more information on periodontal disease see our website handout.



Dental x-ray of the same area shown above, demonstrating marked periodontal disease in association with the oronasal fistula where the canine tooth used to be present.

All oronasal fistulae must be repaired surgically in order for the opening to be closed. Some oronasal fistulas are relatively easy to fix, and some can be very difficult requiring advanced surgical techniques, and possibly multiple surgeries to fully correct the problem. New grafting materials can improve the success of ONF repair. Each patient requires a thorough physical examination and treatment planning prior to the procedure to give them the best chance of healing. Some of the procedures that may be used to close your pet's oronasal fistula include single- and double-flap procedures. Postoperative care will involve 10-14 days of soft food, pain medications and possibly antibiotics. Recheck examination to ensure proper healing is vital to making sure that the oronasal fistula resolves.



Postoperative view of the same dog pictured above after closure of the oronasal fistula. These areas can heal, but only if the proper surgical technique and postoperative care is used.