

## Puppy Clinic –Retained Teeth

Although puppies are born without any visible teeth, the deciduous teeth (milk teeth) are already in place under the gums. When the puppy is about 3 weeks of age the six incisors in the lower jaw start to push up through the gums, closely followed by the six incisors in the upper jaw. The canine teeth, two in the lower jaw and two in the upper jaw start to push through at about 4 weeks of age, followed by six premolars on both the upper and lower jaws, giving a total of 28 deciduous (milk ) teeth.

At about 12 weeks old a puppy begins to lose the deciduous teeth, this temporary set should gradually drop out one by one, exchanged between 3 and 6 months of age for a set of 42 permanent adult teeth, 22 in the lower jaw and 20 in the upper jaw.

Occasionally a deciduous tooth remains in place as a permanent tooth comes through. This may be a single tooth or several in the puppys mouth .Retained teeth are easily seen when the front teeth are affected but may not be so visually obvious if further back in the mouth. Symptoms which may indicate retained teeth are reddened gums, excessive drooling, bloody saliva, signs of pain or distress around the mouth. Very often it is the canine deciduous tooth which is retained causing a problem as the permanent canine tooth erupts further forward than normal which can cause permanent damage to the dogs jaw. If the retained deciduous tooth is loose, giving the puppy plenty of things to chew may help the tooth to drop out. If the milk tooth is firmly fixed, trapped by the adult tooth consult your vet who may need to extract the deciduous tooth with surgery. An infection in the gums can also be a result of this problem, antibiotics and pain relief may be needed to aid healing. It is important to gently check a puppy's mouth regularly and any retained milk teeth removed as soon as possible.

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