

Case of the Month February 2010

A 15yr old mixed breed dog presented for swelling on the left side of the face. The swelling was first noticed 3-4 months ago. Various antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications were used with little results. One month ago, the RDVM extracted the left maxillary 1st molar because it was loose and possibly the source of the swelling. The mass continued to get larger. On presentation, the facial mass was firm and was draining a purulent discharge from the conjunctiva below the left eye. The oral exam showed a large ulcerated lesion surrounding the left maxillary 4th premolar. The tissue appeared neoplastic and had multiple draining lesions consisting of blood and purulent material. The tissue was very friable and bled easily. The 4th premolar was mobile.



Photo showing the swelling on the left side of the face.



The lesion can be seen around the left maxillary 4th premolar tooth.



Intraoral radiograph showing the bone lysis around the 4th premolar (arrow).

Histopathology of the lesion revealed a squamous cell carcinoma. The swelling from an abscessed tooth will sometimes resolve with antibiotics, but the infection will always be present unless root canal therapy or extraction is performed. Also, a neoplastic swelling will sometimes improve with antibiotics because of the secondary bacterial infections that are often present. Taking an intraoral radiograph should be one of the first diagnostic tests performed when oral tumors or tooth root abscesses are suspected. Delaying an oral tumor diagnosis can cause the prognosis to go from good to poor quickly. Unfortunately, this dog's prognosis was very poor.