

CLASS 2 MALOCCLUSIONS



Anatomy of the problem

The lower canine normally sits forward of the upper canine. With a short lower jaw, the lower canines can press into the roof of the mouth, causing pain and damage.



What is a class 2 malocclusion?

(Also known as mandibular brachygnathism, overbite, overjet and overshot jaw.)

A class 2 malocclusion refers to a dental condition in which the upper jaw (maxilla) is longer than the lower jaw (mandible), causing misalignment of the teeth. This can affect your dog's bite, leading to significant pain and discomfort, difficulty eating, and often long-term health problems.

It is usually considered inherited, although when first born, puppies do not tend to show signs. They usually appear when puppies are 6-12 weeks old.

Common Signs of a Class 2 Malocclusion

- Animals are masters of hiding pain. Signs are often subtle and may not be obvious. Regular, thorough veterinary checks of an animal's mouth are vital!
- The malocclusion will normally be evident in puppies as young as 6-16 weeks old. Early intervention is very important and can prevent serious pain and problems in older dogs.
- Difficulty eating or chewing, drooling and excessive salivation: Your dog may show signs of pain or difficulty when eating hard foods or chewing on toys.
- Visible dental wear: Teeth may become worn down, chipped, or damaged over time due to misalignment.
- Behavioural changes: Irritability or reluctance to chew on toys may indicate oral discomfort.
- Facial asymmetry: In severe cases, you may notice uneven facial features as a result of misaligned jaws.

Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will typically diagnose a Class 2 Malocclusion during a routine dental exam. In many cases, further examination under anaesthetic and dental radiographs (X-rays) may be recommended to fully assess the alignment of your dog's teeth and jaws.



Treatment options for Class 2 malocclusions

1. Early Intervention – Deciduous tooth extraction

- Removing the deciduous (baby teeth) is often recommended to help alleviate pain at a critical learning time, as well as create space for adult teeth. This can be done as early as 9–10 weeks old.

2. Orthodontic Appliances

- In mild to moderate cases, we may recommend orthodontic treatment, similar to braces, to help guide the teeth into a more correct position. This approach is not always an option.
- Duration: Treatment can take several months depending on your dog's age, the severity of the malocclusion, and the type of appliance used.
- Maintenance: Regular follow-ups will be necessary to ensure the appliance is effective and that no complications arise.

3. Surgical Correction

- In certain situations, where the jaw misalignment is significant, surgery may be needed to change the shape or height of teeth to reduce damage to the mouth. This is usually a complex procedure that requires careful planning and post-operative care.
- Considerations: This option is generally reserved for dogs with significant malocclusions that cannot be corrected with orthodontics or extractions alone.

4. Extraction of Teeth

- In severe cases, where the teeth are causing pain or damage to other teeth, tooth extraction may be necessary. This is usually done to prevent further damage and improve comfort.
- Recovery: Extraction is a surgical procedure, so your dog will need to recover from anaesthesia and may require pain management and follow-up care. We try to avoid extractions if there is a reasonable alternative.

Post treatment care

Regardless of the treatment approach, your dog will need proper care to ensure healing and comfort:

- Pain Management: After any procedure, your veterinarian may prescribe pain relief medications to help your dog recover comfortably.
- Dietary Adjustments: Soft food may be recommended during the healing process to avoid putting stress on the teeth and jaws.
- Follow-up Visits: Regular check-ups will be required to monitor your dog's recovery and to adjust any orthodontic appliances if necessary.

