



### **Retained deciduous teeth in puppies and kittens**

Puppies normally have 28 deciduous (baby) teeth that erupt during the first six months of life. Kittens have 26 baby teeth. Adult dogs have 42 permanent teeth and adult cats have 30.

The roots of the deciduous teeth resorb (disappear) in order to become loose and fall out. This allows the permanent teeth to erupt normally.

When deciduous teeth don't fall out to make way for the permanent teeth, they are called ***retained deciduous teeth***. Retained deciduous teeth should be extracted surgically soon after they are discovered because they cause dental problems (overcrowding in the mouth, plaque buildup, malocclusion, and abnormal growth of the adult tooth).

If the tooth is extracted early enough, the adult tooth usually will move to its correct position. If the tooth isn't extracted early enough, there is a greater chance that the adult tooth will be malpositioned. Malpositioned teeth can cause damage to the tongue, palate, mandible, etc. Your veterinarian may decide to remove the retained deciduous teeth at the same time your kitten/puppy is spayed or neutered (or earlier if your vet is concerned about the development of the adult tooth).

Remember, it is much easier to position the permanent tooth while it is erupting - not after it has erupted. Repositioning after eruption requires orthodontic care to keep your pet's mouth healthy.

