

Photo 7: Proper needle placement at the entrance of the inferior alveolar foramen.

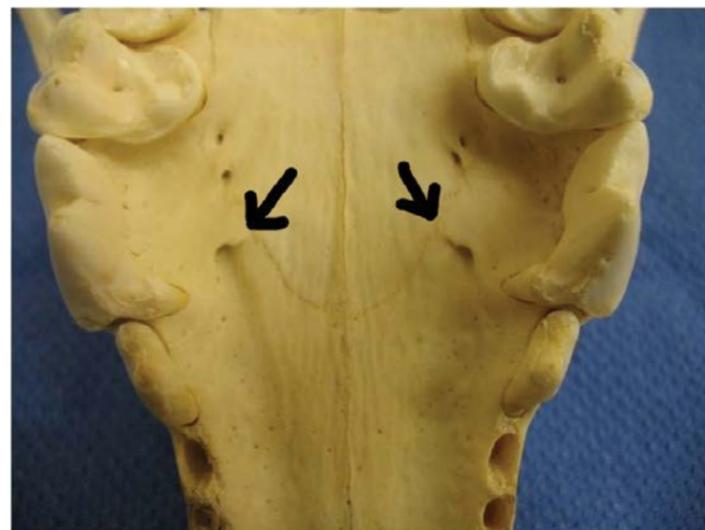


Photo 8: Arrows indicate the location of the major palatine foramen.

Major palatine

The major palatine nerve block is used to anesthetize the hard palate and soft tissues of the hard palate. It is located on the palate, halfway between the midline and dental arcade, at the level of the mesial root of the maxillary first molar tooth in the dog, and the palatal root of the maxillary fourth premolar tooth in the cat.

Post-operative pain control

Upon recovery from anesthesia, it is important to keep patients comfortable, and slowly encourage a return to normal eating habits as soon as they are awake and walking. The short-term use of a canned diet, or moistened dry kibble, will decrease mechanical trauma to the oral surgical site, and may be easier to chew. (To avoid dietary upset due to a change from dry to canned food, it is recommended that dry kibble be soaked until it is soft, to allow the patient to be maintained on its same diet.)

Many drugs are available for post-operative pain management. The most commonly used medications are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and opioids. An excellent reference for veterinary drugs and dosages is *Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook, 6th Edition*; Plumb, Donald, 2008 Wiley-Blackwell Publishing (www.wiley.com)

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs: NSAIDs are used to treat pain and extreme sensitivity associated with inflammation. Most NSAIDs used in veterinary medicine are Cox-2 selective. The breakdown

of arachidonic acid by cyclooxygenase (Cox) enzymes, released at the site of surgery, produces prostaglandins. Further production is created by the development of cytokines and growth factors at the site. Prostaglandins are a component of the inflammatory cascade, and contribute to the sensitization of neurons to noxious stimuli. Inhibition of Cox enzymes will limit prostaglandin production, so that painful inflammation is reduced.

Conclusion

In conclusion, dental nerve blocks are inexpensive to perform, easy to master, and have a significant impact on patient comfort. They can be an invaluable part of a balanced anesthetic protocol, when combined with other analgesic modalities. A multimodal approach to dental analgesia is desired. The duration and extent of the oral procedure will help to determine the desired drug protocol. The goal is to have a patient that is comfortable, eats well and heals quickly.



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