

## GUM CHEWING

This is a silly name for a very painful, chronic condition seen occasionally in dogs. Affected pets develop excess tissue under the tongue or behind the last molars. This tissue interferes with eating and becomes very painful from being repeatedly bitten when the dog attempts to chew. Dogs who have this problem often pant a lot, which stretches this tissue and worsens the problem even more.

Dogs who are gum chewers often are head shy and are slow eaters, sometimes dropping food back out of their mouths as they attempt to eat. Many hide a lot and pant excessively. The mouth is very painful which causes shy, reclusive behavior.

Sometimes there has been an injury to the mouth or face. Once a lump forms after a bruise or cut in the mouth, the dog keeps reinjuring the lump with chewing and it can never heal.

The overgrown tissue needs to be removed surgically. Electrocautery is used to control bleeding and usually many fine sutures are placed which will dissolve on their own. The surgery is delicate and often difficult because of the amount of bleeding that tends to occur with surgery in the mouth. Unfortunately, the problem also tends to recur, so many dogs will need more than one surgical procedure over the years.

Because the mouth is painful both before and after surgery, pain medication will be needed for about two weeks after surgery.