A dental crown in veterinary dentistry is a tooth-shaped "cap" that is placed over a dog or cat's tooth. It covers the tooth to restore (or at least approximate) its shape, size, strength, and/or to improve its appearance. Most crowns in veterinary patients fully encase the entire visible portion of a tooth. When properly performed, crowns are permanent. At Southern California Veterinary dental Specialties and Oral Surgery, we place crowns on police and military dogs on a regular basis with excellent long term results.

Figure 1: Dental picture of a police dog on crowns placed 4 years previous. The patient had worn down his canines on a chain link fence (see figure 2 a) and the crowns were placed to protect the teeth and keep them from breaking.

The most common reasons for a dog or cat to need a crown include: (Figure 2)
- Protecting a weakened tooth from breaking (a)
- Restoring an already broken tooth (b)
- Covering and/or supporting a tooth with a large filling
- Strengthening a malformed tooth (c)
Figure 2: Indications for crowns.

- A significantly weakened maxillary canine from cage chewing.
- A fractured maxillary fourth premolar.
- A maxillary canine with severe enamel hypocalcification.

Metal crowns are the most common type of crown used in dogs and cats because they are the most durable type of crown. (Figure 3) Compared with other crown types, metal crowns also require less tooth structure to be removed. Metal crowns are extremely strong and can withstand a pet’s biting and chewing forces and probably last the longest in terms of wear.

Image 3: Cast metal crowns in place: These teeth correspond to the pre-treatment photos in figure 2.

Porcelain-fused-to-metal or all ceramic dental crowns are made in tooth-colored materials that look like adjacent teeth (unlike the metallic crowns). (Figure 4) The downside to these types of crowns is that they can chip or break. These crowns can be considered for a small pet’s front teeth or pet’s that do not chew or eat hard objects.

Figure 4: All ceramic dental crowns to replace severely fractured maxillary incisors.
- Pre-op photo of the fractured incisors
- Cosmetic tooth colored crowns immediately post-op