# Feline Orofacial Pain Syndrome (FOPS)

Feline Orofacial Pain Syndrome is characterized by face and tongue mutilation and other behavioural signs suggesting oral and facial discomfort (e.g. exaggerated licking and chewing movements, pawing at the face). However, the amount of mutilation is disproportionate to the causes of pain. This disease is most likely a neuropathic pain disorder similar to trigeminal neuralgia in humans.

FOPS the most common seen in Burmese cats and can also affect other breeds including Siamese, Tonkinese, Burmilla and the domestic shorthair. It is thought that FOPS is an inherited condition. FOPS can affect any age of cats, however, many affected cats will show first clinical signs when erupting permanent teeth. Oral lesions (especially dental disease) and environmental stress can precipitate the condition.

The trigeminal nerve conveys sensory information (e.g. pain and touch around the face and mouth) to the brain. In FOPS, when the nerve fires, for example when triggered by teething or dental disease, it sends an inappropriately large message of pain. Clinical signs can be continuous or episodic. Episodes can last several minutes or up to hours.

There is no definitive diagnostic test for this disease and a diagnosis is reached based on the elimination of other diseases that may present similarly.

Treatment of FOPS would include reducing the amount of triggers, for example, treating periodontal disease and reducing stress in the environment. Factors to consider in reducing stress include:

1) Does the cat have its own secure core territory? (e.g. own litter tray, feeding area and private space)
2) Visual access into the home
3) Points of exit/entry
4) Adequate provision of privacy
5) Is the cat able to use its natural behavioural strategies for coping with stress

Until discomfort can be controlled, mutilation should be prevented by using an Elizabethan

collar/paw bandaging. Treatment may also include anti-epileptic prescribed drugs to reduce discomfort.

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