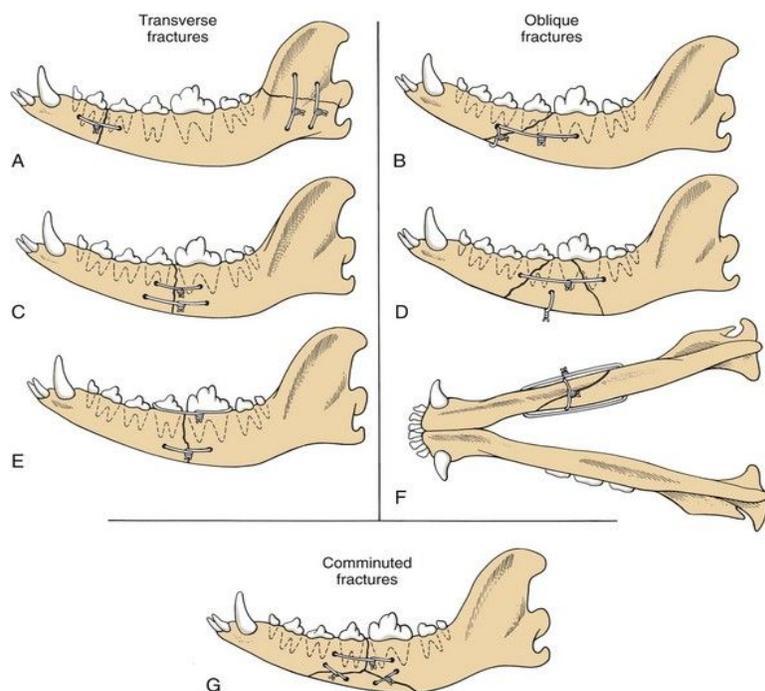
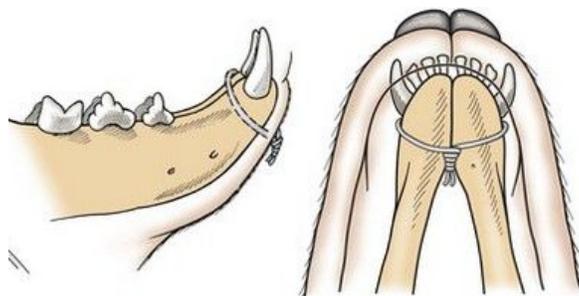


# Fracture of the Mandible (Lower Jaw) in Dogs

The mandible is one of the hardest bones in the body and a great deal of force is necessary to break the bone. Fractures of the mandible (lower jaw) are usually the result of major trauma, especially to the head, but can be caused by disease of the bone itself, dental disease, or sometimes by the veterinarian during extraction of diseased teeth. These fractures can occur at any location along the length of the bone from the midpoint where the two halves of the mandible meet in the front, back to the temporo-mandibular joint (TMJ). The fractures can occur on both sides of the jaw at the same time. Many of these fractures are “open” but occasionally “closed” fractures do occur. Mandibular fractures can also be categorized as “simple” or “comminuted.”



**mandibular fractures place together with wire.**



## **What to Watch For**

Signs of a fractured mandible in dogs may include:

- Drooling
- Inability to close the mouth
- Pain when the dog attempts to eat

## **Diagnosis of Fracture of the Mandible in Dogs**

A thorough physical examination including examination of the oral cavity can often determine if a mandibular fracture is present. Additional tests may include:

- Chest radiographs (X-rays)
- Complete orthopedic examination
- Complete neurological examination
- Radiographs of the mandible
- No laboratory tests are required to make the diagnosis.

## **Treatment of Fracture of the Mandible in Dogs**

Treatment for a fractured mandible varies depending on the area of the fracture and the severity. Since most mandibular fractures are trauma related, emergency care for concurrent problems caused by the trauma is often performed before mandibular fracture repair. Some fractures of the mandible can be managed without surgery by placing a muzzle on the dog's snout, while some require anesthesia and surgical stabilization of the bone fragments for the best results. If dental disease is suspected as the cause for the fracture, a full dental cleaning with extractions of some teeth may be required. Injectable analgesics (pain medications) are given to the animal while being treated in the hospital and may be continued orally once discharged. Antibiotics are commonly given to minimize the chance for systemic infection from bacteria in the mouth.

## **Home Care and Prevention**

After discharge from the hospital, the dog must be restricted from activity to allow the fracture time to heal properly. Activity must be restricted for several weeks after surgery; the duration will vary depending on the severity of the injury and any concurrent injuries the animal may have. Restricted activity means that the animal should be kept confined to a carrier, crate, or small room whenever he cannot be supervised. Playing and rough-housing should be avoided, even if he appears to be feeling well. It is especially important that dogs with mandibular fractures not be allowed to chew on toys or other objects and be fed only soft food or blenderized gruel. Several weeks after surgery a follow-up appointment will be needed. The jaw may need to be radiographed again to make sure the bone is healing properly. If healing has occurred as expected, the external fixator, symphyseal wire, or other wires placed around the teeth will be removed and the animal's activity level and diet will be allowed to return to normal.