



Dental Disease

Dental disease, also known as periodontal disease, is common in pets, especially as they get older. The main reason for this is that they don't brush their teeth! Just like in people the teeth need brushing or tartar builds up, and the gums become sore – this is known as gingivitis.

Dry food for cats and dogs, and dog chews will help, but neither of these will do as much as brushing.

Tooth brushing

If we do not brush our pet's teeth, tartar builds up and infection sets in. A layer of nasty bacteria covers the teeth and often the tooth roots rot away and the teeth become loose. Gingivitis occurs as bacteria cause the gums to become inflamed, this leads to painful sore gums. Many animals continue eating despite this pain, as the drive to eat is so strong. Therefore it can be hard to recognise a problem without looking at the teeth regularly.

This can be done by lifting your pet's lips either side of the mouth, or can be done by a vet or nurse here at the practice.

Brushing your pet's teeth is not as hard as it sounds – ask for a demo from one of our nurses. If teeth are brushed from a young age our pets will tolerate it – some even enjoy it, with the help of some meaty toothpaste, and will mean dental treatment may never be necessary.



Risks

If your pet's teeth are in need of some attention, one of our vets may recommend dental treatment. This involves a general anaesthetic to assess and treat the teeth. There are several risks of leaving dental disease untreated. Firstly the levels of bacteria in animals mouths can reach dangerous levels, sometimes entering the bloodstream. This can make your pet seriously unwell, with infection setting up in the heart (endocarditis) or other organs. It can cause your pet a great deal of pain, and often bad breath too (halitosis). Animals are very good at hiding pain and often people notice their pets are a lot happier after dental treatment – we often put this down to reduction in dental pain or toothache.

Anaesthetics

Many people are concerned about allowing their pet to have a general anaesthetic as they get older. Of course every general anaesthetic carries risks. But age itself is not a risk – it is only if an older pet has underlying problems when anaesthetics become more risky. For this reason one of our vets would always carry out a full general health check before any treatment. Also we recommend pre-anaesthetic bloods and sometimes a drip – fluids for our older patients.

What happens during the treatment?

Dental treatment for pets involves a general anaesthetic – pets don't sit still like we do at the dentist!

The vet, helped by a nurse will then scale all teeth to clean them and allow assessment of each tooth's health. If there is gingivitis, sometimes this exposes the roots.

This leads to pain, so these teeth will need to be removed (extracted). Also any teeth that are loose will need removing as these cause discomfort to the pet and do not aid eating.

Sometimes if dental disease is severe we need to remove nearly all the teeth. But don't worry – pets can still eat really well with teeth missing – some even manage biscuits! Any remaining teeth are polished.

Costs

Unfortunately dental procedures often take a long time, as each tooth is carefully cleaned and checked. This means dental treatment can cost a lot of money. However this is a worthwhile investment, as it can often lead to a longer happier life for pets in their older years.

Act now!

No-one wants to be in the situation where we are operating on a debilitated pet, in an emergency because their mouth has become so bad that they cannot eat at all.

If your pet has dental disease it is always best to treat problems early, and get dental work done whilst your pet is otherwise well.

If you have any questions or would like to speak to a vet or a nurse about dental treatment, please feel free to call the practice or book an appointment.

SEVERE DENTAL DISEASE – imagine if this was in your mouth!



A HEALTHY MOUTH



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Opening Times

- Monday - Friday: 8.30am - 6.30pm
- Saturday: 9.00am - 11.00am
- Sunday: 9.30am (Emergencies Only)
- Consultations by appointment only.