



## LET'S TALK ABOUT DENTAL DISEASE

### Why should you be worried about dental disease?

An animal's mouth is the perfect incubator for **bacteria**. Over time this bacteria will form plaque on the surface of the teeth and leads to inflammation of gums. Eventually resulting in **periodontal disease** – in this condition the inflammation causes infection and destruction of the tissue (including the bone) around the tooth. Bacteria in the mouth can also spread through the blood stream to all organs in the body. The heart, kidneys and liver can be seriously affected by this bacterial spread.

**Poor dental hygiene** can be a source of long term **pain** and **discomfort** for many pets. Most owners are unaware of this discomfort because most animals will not cry out in the presence of such pain – **they do very well to tolerate it.**

Dental disease is more common in small breeds – due to overcrowding of teeth, genetic predisposition and dietary preferences.

**How will I know if my pet has bad teeth?** The first thing to do is to  
in your pet's mouth for the following signs of dental disease:



- Plaque – brown discolouration of teeth, in more advanced stages becomes calculus (hard mineralised material)
- Gum inflammation and recession
- Halitosis (bad breath) – is produced by bacteria causing infection
- Loose teeth
- Excessive salivation
- Pus/discharge



### DID YOU KNOW?

That over 80% of dogs have significant dental disease by the age of 3!

Dental cleaning removes plaque and eliminates the source of infection.

Professional veterinary dental therapy is essential to prevent and control periodontal disease and should be performed on a regular basis (every 12 months). With professional dental cleaning and follow up care gingivitis is reversible. Severe periodontal disease is not reversible and may require tooth removal.

### How to manage/treat dental disease?

#### What's involved with a dental procedure:

Firstly a **dental examination** is performed – which is a thorough assessment of the mouth and your animal's general health. The vet will look for tartar, gingivitis, as well as the presence of periodontal disease and obvious tooth fractures.

A **general anaesthetic** is required to perform the dental cleaning due to the following:

1. Ensures your animal has a stress and pain free experience
2. 60% of the tooth lies below the gum line – anaesthesia allows us to take comprehensive dental x-rays and thoroughly clean this area.

## Dental cleaning includes:

- Removal of the visible plaque and tartar from the teeth and under the gum
- Polishing the surface of teeth
- Removal of fractured or infected teeth
- Dental charting is performed so that the progression of dental disease can be monitored over time
- During the anaesthetic your pet will be monitored closely by a qualified veterinary nurse
- Your pet will receive adequate pain relief and fluids during the procedure.

## How to actively keep your pet's teeth clean and mouth healthy?

Our pets rely on us to make sure their teeth and oral health are in good order, proper home care is essential to the process.

### ACTIVE HOME CARE

1. **DAILY TOOTH BRUSHING** – is the best way of keeping teeth clean.
  - Most dogs and cats will allow tooth brushing, especially if it is started as a routine at an early age.
  - You can use a finger brush or a soft child's tooth brush
  - Special animal toothpaste can be used as a way to make sure your animal enjoys the experience flavour (note: please don't use human toothpaste as it can be harmful to pets).
  - There are also oral gels and wipes that can be used daily, especially in cats.



### PASSIVE HOME CARE

2. **DIET**
  - There are diets especially designed to help clean the teeth such as Hills T/d (dental care)
  - The size and texture of biscuit mechanically scrapes down the tooth to remove plaque
  - If you are considering changing your pet's diet, please do so gradually
3. **DENTAL CHEWS**
  - They work in two ways either by changing the chemical properties of saliva to stop bacteria adhering to teeth or mechanical removal of plaque.
  - There are a number of products available such as Oravet chews, Greenies Chews etc.
  - Some products claim to remove plaque but are actually ineffective (Dentastix) – no scientific studies have been performed to quantify the claims.
4. **RAW HIDE TREATS and BONES**
  - Can aid in helping to remove plaque
  - Are not a substitute for daily teeth brushing
  - To be effective need to be given on regular basis
  - Chicken necks/wings are not very effective
  - Please only use softer brisket bones
  - Be aware that bones can cause the following problems
    - Fracture/break teeth
    - Can damage the gums
    - Can cause inflammation or obstruction in the intestines
    - Can cause constipation
    - Don't feed cooked bones as they are more likely to splinter



Even with daily care, tartar may still form on teeth which would necessitate periodic professional cleaning. If you are unwilling to commit to the oral health care of your pet, they may end up with periodontitis (disease and infection) which is painful and may require teeth to be removed.

If you require any further information about dental disease or have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us at the clinic on 6766 3088.

**Thank you for your commitment to your pet's oral health.**



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