



DENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUR PET



PERIODONTAL DISEASE IS PREVENTABLE

Daily removal of plaque is important for good oral hygiene and the long term dental health of your pet. Without daily brushing, an accumulation of bacteria (plaque) will build up on the gum line. Eventually, calculus (tartar) forms further irritating the gums and infection progresses to loosen and destroy the attachment of the tooth.

One of the first indicators that your dog's teeth need attention is that his breath smells bad.

Brushing your pet's teeth may be difficult when you first start, but with a lot of persistence and positive reinforcement for you and your pet, it can be accomplished and it will get easier with time.

Start with a soft-bristled toothbrush or finger brush. Only use veterinary specific enzymatic toothpaste as human toothpastes are not suitable for animals. If you cannot brush your pet's teeth, there are products available to aid in the prevention of plaque and calculus accumulation. Brushing your pet's teeth every day is the gold standard! On a monthly basis examine your pet's teeth to look for an accumulation of yellow or brown material at the area where the tooth meets the gum line.

Once you notice plaque or tartar accumulation, it's time for a professional teeth cleaning.

According to the Australian and American Veterinary Dental Societies, more than 80% of Dogs and 70% of cats develop gum disease by the age of three.

Can I just use my fingernail to remove the tartar?

Dental disease occurs below the gum line. If you use your fingernail to remove the tartar from the tooth, you are not removing the disease below the gum line. In order to comprehensively prevent dental decay, plaque and tartar must be removed from below the gum line during professional cleaning.

Under general anaesthesia, our vets thoroughly assess each individual tooth for dental disease and then clean and polish every surface of each tooth.

SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

Signs that your pet may be suffering from periodontal disease

- ★ Bad Breath (leading sign of infection in the mouth)
- ★ Tooth discolouration
- ★ Tooth loss
- ★ Red or swollen gums
- ★ Bleeding gums
- ★ Difficulty eating
- ★ Behavioural changes

Which pets are most at risk of periodontal disease?

All dogs and cats are at risk of dental diseases. Smaller dog breeds are more prone than larger breeds because the teeth are closer together in small dogs, and these dogs usually live longer. Dental disease is more common in older pets.



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WHAT DOES A DENTAL PROCEDURE INVOLVE?

People regularly visit the dentist for their own dental health checks and will happily sit in the chair, keep their mouths open and not bite the dentist. Even the most well behaved pet will not comply so easily. It is impossible to properly clean and examine your pet's teeth without having them under anaesthesia and safely intubated to protect their lungs from inhaling stray calculus

and bacteria during the procedure.

When your vet cleans your pet's teeth, the following steps are involved:

- ★ Your pet is anaesthetised and an endotracheal tube is placed to ensure the plaque, bacteria and fluid do not get into the lungs.
- ★ Each tooth is checked with a specialised probe to ensure there are no deep pockets between the tooth and gum.
- ★ Each tooth is scaled with an ultrasonic scaler.
- ★ Loose, fractured or teeth with severe periodontal disease are removed using local anaesthetic nerve blocks, sectioning and elevation, the socket is flushed and cleaned and then sometimes sutured closed.
- ★ All teeth are polished to make sure the surface is smooth and therefore less likely to attract new plaque.
- ★ Your pet is recovered from anaesthesia safely and with continual nurse observation.

