



## **DENTAL CARE**

Plaque and tartar buildup on your pet's teeth can lead to gingivitis (sore, inflamed gums), receding gum lines and bone loss around the roots. In time this can lead to painful infections around the tooth roots and loss of teeth. Furthermore, bacteria can enter the bloodstream through infected gums and lead to infections in the liver kidneys and heart which can damage these organs and can even contribute to congestive heart failure. Indications of dental disease are bad breath, red gums and a yellow brown crust of tartar around the gum line. Preventative dental care for pets is similar to dental care for humans.

## **DENTAL EXAM**

The doctor will evaluate your pet's teeth as part of the annual physical exam and health assessment and advise you of the need for dental cleaning and continued home care. Over 80% of dogs and cats over 4 years old have periodontal disease and will require their first dental cleaning. Senior pets or those with more advanced periodontal disease may need their teeth checked and cleaned every 6 months.

## **DENTAL CLEANING**

Your pet needs general anesthesia to safely and thoroughly clean its teeth and will need to stay with us for the day. Patients need to be admitted between 8:00 and 8:15am and are usually ready to go home after 4:00pm. All pets receive pre-operative blood tests to evaluate their kidney and liver function and a physical exam is performed prior to receiving any anesthesia. IV catheters are placed as an added safety precaution and for the administration of IV fluids prior to and during the procedure to better support the health of your pet. Pets are then given an injectable anesthetic agent to make them sleepy enough for us to place an endotracheal tube through which they will breathe the general anesthetic. The general anesthetic we use is called isoflurane. It is a gas anesthetic that is widely used in human surgery. All patients are monitored very carefully using the latest equipment, by well-trained staff and certified veterinary technicians. All pets are given pain relief medication before and after their procedure and are sent home with medication for their continued recovery at home.

The actual cleaning procedure is very similar to what happens when you go to have your teeth cleaned. The dental technician uses an ultrasonic scaler to remove tartar above and below the gum line. The technician notes the condition of the teeth and gums and any loose or infected teeth. The doctor then examines the mouth and performs any necessary and agreed upon procedures such as dental x rays, gingivectomy, periodontal treatment or extractions. Finally, the teeth are polished to create a smooth surface that helps to slow the accumulation of plaque and tartar. Your pet may be put on antibiotics prior to the procedure and for a short time afterwards. While your pet is under anesthesia, local nerve blocks and extra pain relief are given to those pets that will need to have more involved procedures performed.

Pets who have had extractions will receive pain medication to go home with or a written prescription for pain medication. Most pets are able to return home between 3:00 and 5:00pm the same day. Home care consists of keeping your pet comfortable and feeding softened or canned food for the next few days.

## **MAINTENANCE**

We recommend that your pet's teeth are cleaned and polished at least once a year. Even when teeth appear healthy, bacteria can build up in spaces between the teeth and gums.

## **HOME DENTAL CARE**

We recommend that you brush your pet's teeth everyday as part of your pet's morning routine. Doing so will not only help your pet's breath, but will lengthen the time in between cleanings.

It is easiest to start brushing your pet's teeth when they are young. The best time to establish a daily routine is right before breakfast. For puppies and kittens, begin by putting a small amount of specially formulated pet toothpaste on your index finger. Never use human toothpaste! It can irritate your pet's stomach and problems can arise from ingesting fluoride found in human toothpaste. Hold your pet's mouth closed and gently insert your finger under the lips and rub the paste along the gums, top and bottom on one side, then move to the other side. Gradually work up to using a soft toothbrush, fingerbrush or gauze square wrapped around your finger.