

Dental Disease

Dental disease is one of the most common problems seen by veterinarians. Dental disease is caused by bacterial plaque that forms on the surface of teeth from poor dental cleaning ie chewing bones or dental diets. This plaque is then mineralized to form a hard cement like substance called tartar. The tartar and bacteria on the tooth surface lead to inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) which when allowed to progress leads to irreversible damage to the bone and ligaments that support the teeth. This leads to tooth mobility and loss. In cats we also see a syndrome, where erosion of enamel exposes the sensitive parts of the teeth. This is intensely painful and usually the only treatment for these lesions is tooth removal.

The impact of dirty teeth is not only their unsightly look and odour but they also pose another real risk and that is from the seeding of bacteria from the gums to the blood stream. Seeded bacteria can lodge in other parts of the body such as the heart valves and kidneys leading to irreparable damage.

What can I do if my pets teeth are dirty?

Because tartar is like cement it is often impossible to clean it off properly without a thorough scale and polish, like we have for our teeth. Obviously dogs and cats need an anaesthetic for this, which allows for a great clean up under the gum line and also allows us to comfortably remove teeth that are beyond salvaging. A lot of owners are concerned when they hear their pet has to lose teeth but are quite astounded at how much more comfortable they are once the teeth are extracted. There are so many reasons why your pet will be so much better without a loose or rotten tooth than trying to salvage it. If your pet has not recently seen a vet, we suggest making an appointment so we can evaluate him/her for the anaesthetic and discuss some tests that maybe warranted to assist in making the anaesthetic as safe as possible. We will provide you with a guide regarding how many teeth may need to be extracted and therefore an estimated cost.

How can I keep my pet's teeth clean?

Once your pet's teeth have been cleaned, keeping them clean is just as important. Chewing of products such as raw bones and other chewing products such as dental-bones provide not only a natural abrasive force against the teeth but they also generate saliva production which contains natural anti-bacterial substances. Additional to this a soft baby's tooth brush with or without pet toothpaste is a recommended technique to assist in keeping the teeth and gums clean. Alternatively, a gauze swab on a finger to rub against the teeth and gums. Monitoring your pet's breath and chewing habits will assist you in knowing when another dental visit is due but your pet's all important annual health check is going to be the best way your vet can inspect all the teeth and give you an overview of your pet's current oral health.