

PERIODONTAL DISEASE AND YOUR PET

Did you know that according to the American Veterinary Dental Society, over 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have periodontal disease before 3 year of age? Periodontal disease includes infection and inflammation of gum tissue and surrounding supportive tissues around the teeth and teeth roots. The problem begins BELOW the gum line – an area that cannot be seen. Plaque (food particles, bacteria, and saliva) attaches to the tooth structures and accumulates in pockets around the teeth causing gingivitis and bad breath. As the infection builds and the bacteria in your pet's mouth proliferate, the plaque will harden into tartar (calculus) and lead to mouth pain, abscessed teeth and eventual tooth loss. An infection in the mouth can also spread to other areas of the body through the blood stream. As a result of untreated periodontal disease, it is not uncommon for pets (and people) to have a compromised immune system/chronic infections, chronic pain, kidney or liver disease or other systemic conditions.

To prevent this painful and progressive infection, regular dental checkups performed by your veterinarian are necessary, so appropriate recommendations for your pet's well-being can be established. A professional dental cleaning may be necessary. The need for professional dental prophylaxis depends on many factors such as: breed, age, diet, underlying conditions, and at home dental care.

If you are introducing a tooth brushing regimen to your pet, it is best to start slow for a few minutes each day. Let your pet get used to the PET tooth paste on your finger while gently rubbing it on the teeth along the gum line and eventually, they will enjoy the flavor and the procedure. You should use animal toothpaste because human toothpaste has several additives that should not be swallowed. If plaque (soft material) is present, the brushing will remove it. If tartar (hard material) is present on the teeth, a professional dental prophylaxis by your veterinarian may be necessary.

Routine periodontal treatment by your veterinarian requires general anesthesia to scale material from under the gum line along all tooth surfaces, perform a complete oral exam/oral cancer screen, polishing of the teeth, fluoride treatment and oral rinsing of any remaining bacteria or loose particles. Pre-anesthetic blood work may also be necessary to rule out underlying problems that a thorough physical exam may not indicate. With these applications, current state-of-the art dental instrumentation and skill, and anesthesia equipment, this poses minimal risk to your pet.

Thank you,
Dr. Jennifer M. Perusek and Dr. Frank W. Perusek

Also see: <http://www.grangervet.com/Dentistry.html>