



What does Dental Disease mean for your pet?

What is Dental Disease?

Dental disease, or periodontal disease is caused by an infection called plaque. Plaque is made up of food particles, saliva and bacteria. It sticks to the tooth surface and if not removed will calcify into tartar (or calculus).

This takes place above and below the gum line and over time can lead to the destruction of the supportive tissues and jawbone, resulting in bad breath and eventual loss of teeth.

How do I know if my pet has dental disease?

More than 85% of dogs and cats over four years old have some form of periodontal disease. There are various signs you can look out for such as:

- Bad Breath
- Discoloured teeth
- Loose teeth
- Excessive drooling, sometimes blood stained inflamed gums.
- Dropping of food from the mouth when eating, or reluctant to chew or eat at all, especially hard food.
- Pain when handled around the head
- Facial swelling
- Behavioural changes (e.g. lethargy, increased aggression)
- Pawing at the mouth
- Receding gums

How do I prevent dental disease?

Most dogs will respond well to the inclusion of large, raw marrowbones in their diet such as lamb shanks, combined with biscuits and daily brushing if required. On the other hand cats prefer raw chicken wings and biscuits.

are a number of specific dental care products available that will further prevent plaque. Such as, small soft tooth-brushes and pet toothpaste used to brush the gum line or rawhide chews with impregnated pet toothpaste used as a cleansing treat. Remember that gum disease is caused by infection. If you help to

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remove the disease causing plaque from your pet's teeth, you greatly improve the chances of successful therapy.

Does a bit of dental disease really matter?

Does a bit of dental disease really matter? Even the early stages of plaque, tartar and gingivitis can be painful for our pets. If these problems develop into decay, infection and abscessation then there is a significant level of pain involved. There is also a concern that low-grade, long-term bacterial shedding from a chronically affected mouth may affect the health of other organs like the eyes, kidneys and heart valves in pets with dental disease

What should I do if I suspect my pet has dental disease?

If you think your pet is showing any signs of dental disease it is important that treatment is started immediately before any irreversible damage occurs. At this point it is important to contact one of our healthcare team members immediately to make an appointment with your veterinarian for a dental check-up.

Depending on the condition of your pet's teeth and gums, we will clean them to remove scale and infection, polish to further remove plaque, and flush to eliminate bacteria. It may also be necessary to remove teeth that are fractured or loose. These procedures will be conducted under a general anaesthetic and in certain cases will be followed by treatment with antibiotics to prevent infection of irritated gums.

Just like your own dentist we use specialized dentistry instruments including ultrasonic and hand scaling equipment throughout this procedure.

What should I do after my pet has had his/her teeth cleaned?

If your pet does have veterinary dental treatment it is important to then provide good homecare to try and prevent or minimise further work being done in the future. Once the teeth are cleaned and polished (or if your pet is lucky enough to already have clean teeth) then prevention is the key. Daily brushing with dedicated pet toothpaste is ideal, dental diets like Hills™ Prescription Diet t/d, Royal Canin Dental Diet, Oravet Chews or using Hexarinse can also be a huge benefit and dental toys or treats may also help.

Finally, make sure you obtain regular check-ups so your veterinarian can detect any cracks, chips, holes, loose teeth, gum ulcers, growths or infections.

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What if my pet has a broken tooth?

Teeth may be broken by chewing bones that are too large, by fighting and by accidents. A freshly broken tooth that exposes the nerve is painful and needs immediate attention as after several days the nerve becomes irreversibly inflamed and then dies. This allows infection to enter the tooth and gain access to the root.

Once infection is present the tooth needs either extracting or root canal filling. Left untreated these teeth can cause abscesses in the jaw bone and be a source of bacterial infection that can spread to the heart, kidneys and other major organs. Contact us immediately if you notice a broken tooth.

What if my pet has a tooth removed?

Where possible we always try to save teeth. It is in our pet's best interests to have a full set of teeth. However if a tooth is too infected or loose or is going to be a source of future problems then we may need to remove it. Cats and dogs do very well after teeth have been extracted. In extreme cases this can mean all of the teeth.

Remember it is much better to have no tooth and a healthy gum than a retained tooth and ongoing infection.

Dental disease is an extremely common problem in pets and we can help!

4 STAGES OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

<p>STAGE 1:</p>  <p>Gingivitis & Some Plaque</p>	<p>STAGE 2:</p>  <p>Early Periodontitis</p>	<p>STAGE 3:</p>  <p>Moderate Periodontitis</p>	<p>STAGE 4:</p>  <p>Advanced Periodontitis</p>
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