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The Prevention and Treatment of Dental Disease

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Over 85% of all dogs beyond the age of three and 80% of cats beyond the age of five are affected by some form of dental disease.



Manifestations of dental disease include:

- 1) Dental plaque and tartar on the teeth
- 2) Gingivitis (inflammation of the gums)
- 3) Periodontal disease (progressive destruction of gum and bony tissues)
- 4) Abscesses (pockets of infection associated with the teeth).
- 5) Cavities or cavity-like erosions (in cats). In addition, pets with dental disease may develop bad breath, bleeding from the mouth, and nasal discharge. These problems are usually interrelated and may result in life-threatening heart, kidney, and liver disease if left untreated.

Initially, dental prophylaxis (cleaning) is recommended in the treatment of a pet with dental disease. This involves the use of hand and ultrasonic scalers and polishing. In addition, pets affected with dental disease may benefit from periodontics (gum procedures), endodontics (root canals), restorative dentistry (eg, fillings), and extractions where necessary. In most cases, a pet requiring a dental procedure requires an anesthetic involving a one-day stay in the hospital. Older pets may require pre-operative testing (blood work, EKG, chest x-rays) prior to the use of an anesthetic.

Once adequate treatment has been obtained, the progression of dental disease may be slowed by feeding hard foods and by brushing the pet's teeth. The animal whose owner brushes his teeth, is a happier, healthier pet!

HOW TO BRUSH YOUR PET'S TEETH

- 1) Keep sessions limited to one minute each at the same time and place daily.
- 2) Start by getting your pet used to having something placed in the mouth. Place your finger (unless your pet is a biter!), dipped in luke warm water, or warm diluted bouillion, inside the cheek along the outer surfaces of the teeth. Follow with praise and reward.
- 3) Once your pet has accepted this procedure, progress to a dampened gauze pad or panty hose wrapped around your finger. Gently sweep across the outer surfaces of each tooth. Follow with praise. Continue daily until your pet accepts this with little objection.
- 4) Moisten a pet CET toothbrush or an Oral-B 20 soft children's toothbrush(R) with a pet toothpaste (available through your veterinarian). The cheek should be gently pulled away from the teeth and the brush inserted at a 45 degree angle between tooth and cheek. Concentrate on the area where tooth meets gum using short, gentle strokes over the external surfaces especially the cheek teeth in the back). Praise your pet during and after each session.
- 5) Have a veterinary dental exam done on your pet every 6 months to help assure dental health and possibly even prolong the life of your pet.