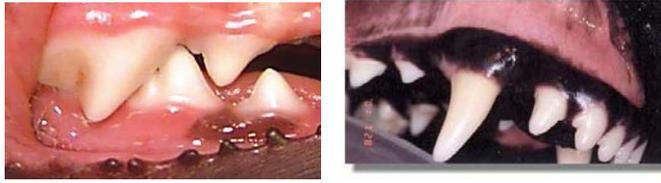


## DENTAL TALK

### Did you know?

- ❖ Adult dogs have **42** teeth and cats have **30** teeth.



**Normal Appearance**

- ❖ Periodontal disease is by far the number one most diagnosed problem in small animal patients today. By the age of two, 70% of cats and 80% of dogs have some degree of periodontal disease.
- ❖ Though preventative dentistry is important in all dogs, smaller dogs tend to develop dental problems at an earlier age.
- ❖ Bad breath is often the first sign of dental disease an owner notices. Other clinical signs of dental disease include:



**Inflamed gums- gingivitis**



**Dental tartar**



**Retained deciduous (baby) teeth**



**Draining tract /root exposure**



**Loose teeth**

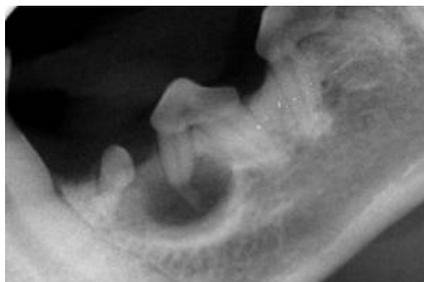


**Growth in mouth**

- ❖ Eventually you begin to see soft tissue and bone loss around the tooth, which we call periodontitis. As teeth become loose and infection spreads, the teeth become painful. Remember, typically if it is red, it is painful.
- ❖ Periodontal disease not only causes tooth loss and bad breath, but also many local and systemic problems. Untreated dental (periodontal) disease is the single greatest cause of health problems in small animals. Preventing and treating periodontal disease can significantly add to the quality of your pet's life. As your pet's healthcare team, it is our responsibility to help prevent, recognize, and treat dental disease in your pet.
- ❖ Research in humans shows that untreated periodontal disease is a key factor in the development of heart, liver and kidney problems and is a source of chronic low-grade infection. In fact, in women periodontal disease is a contributing factor to osteoporosis, birth defects, bone loss, and increased arthritis pain.
- ❖ In many cases you may not be able to recognize signs of dental pain in your pet. Our pets' instincts tell them to hide pain or illness. In nature, sick animals are rejected from the pack and become victims of predators. Our pets' instincts also tell them they must eat to survive, no matter how painful their teeth may have become.

### What happens?

- ❖ Bacteria-filled plaque forms on your pet's teeth within 30 minutes of eating. Plaque persists if not brushed off daily. The bacteria cause bad breath, infection, and potentially more serious health problems.
- ❖ In absence of home and in hospital professional dental care, the plaque hardens into tartar within 24 hours.
- ❖ While plaque can be removed by brushing, dental tartar cannot. Tartar should be professionally removed from the tooth surface before it begins to affect the gum line. We call this stage Grade I. There are a total of 4 grades of periodontal disease. At Grade 2, we begin to see irreversible damage done to the gum attachment of the tooth and underlying bone. Grade 4 is the worst stage and is associated with inflammation, swelling, pustular discharge, advanced bone loss, and tooth instability.
- ❖ While cleaning the tartar from the surface of the tooth can help with the appearance of the tooth, plaque will begin building again within 24 hours of the procedure.
- ❖ Home care is also vital in preventing gum disease, loose teeth, abscessed teeth, and bad breath.
- ❖ Periodontitis is irreversible but can be controlled if there is early detection through dental x-rays.



Notice the bone loss around the root of this tooth

### What then?

- ❖ Once tartar develops, it can only be removed by having your pet's teeth professionally cleaned. This is similar to what you receive at your dentist's office. Your pet will be anesthetized for a complete oral exam and professional cleaning. This is the only way we can truly evaluate your pet's mouth. An awake animal will not tolerate the sounds and sensation of the ultrasonic cleaner. While there is always a slight risk with any

anesthesia, today's anesthetics are safer than ever, even for older pets. The risk of complications of an infected mouth can far out weigh the risk of a general anesthesia. A routine professional cleaning includes:

- **A full physical examination**
  - **A pre-surgical blood profile**
  - **An intravenous catheter**
  - **IV Fluids during the procedure**
  - **A full oral exam once your pet has been anesthetized.**
  - **Ultrasonic and hand scaling tartar from the crowns (the part of the tooth above the gum line) of the teeth.**
  - **Polishing the surface to help reduce plaque buildup.**
- Most Vets perform pre-surgical lab work to help rule out any pre-existing internal problems that may not be evident during a physical exam. Because blood flow to most internal organs decreases during a general anesthesia, we need to determine that the kidneys and liver are functioning normally.
  - Both cats and dogs should be current on their heartworm test and heartworm preventative prior to anesthesia.
  - The pet is placed on I.V. fluids during the procedure to increase blood pressure and maintain blood flow to the vital organs.
  - Once a patient is anesthetized, the vet can thoroughly evaluate their teeth. We use a periodontal probe to locate any periodontal pockets and tartar under the gum line. Each tooth is gently probed to look for detachment of the gum and possible problems with the root of each tooth.



- If pockets are found or problems are noted with the crowns (i.e. very loose or fractured teeth), some vets will recommend taking dental x-rays to evaluate the roots of the affected teeth. It is imperative that the vet be able to reach someone during the procedure in order to give an accurate estimate of additional work (i.e. radiographs, extractions, etc.) that may be needed and obtain permission from the owner to proceed.

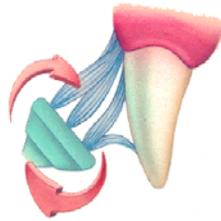


- Once the dental radiographs have been evaluated, additional work (i.e. root canal therapy, crowning, etc.) may be recommended at follow-up visit.
- In many cases, procedures such as root canal therapy and crown placement can be performed to save the affected tooth, but these procedures must be performed before there is irreversible damage done to the surrounding bone structure of the tooth. Sometimes it is better to extract the diseased tooth if there is severe bone disease in order to stop the bone loss and save the neighboring teeth.

- Sometimes, extensive dental work can be staged, especially if the owner is not prepared for the additional costs.
- The single most important goal when scheduling a pet for a dental prophylaxis is evaluating the mouth while the pet is under anesthesia. Once the teeth have been probed and radiographs taken, a more accurate assessment can be made of what is needed for your pet to have a healthier mouth.
- Once the mouth has been evaluated, tartar is removed from the crowns of the teeth and just under the gum line with special instruments.
- Hidden tartar and the bacteria on it will continue to destroy the tissues holding the tooth in place, if it is not found and removed.



- Next the teeth are polished to make the enamel surface smooth so that the plaque cannot establish a strong grasp on the tooth.
- Unfortunately, without preventative care the plaque, tartar, and bad breath will return.



### What can you do?

- ❖ There are several preventative products available. Which products you chose typically will depend on your pet's temperament and your particular life style.
- ❖ Brushing your pet's teeth daily with an approved toothpaste for pets is still the best way to remove the plaque.
- ❖ For the few pets that will not tolerate brushing, there are other products that are less labor intensive and can help reduce plaque and tartar build up.
  - CET chews is a rawhide product that contains an enzymatic cleaner. Giving your pet a CET chew 3-4 times a week can help reduce plaque build up, but will not remove tartar.
  - Science Diet Oral Care and Science diet T/D are designed to help scrape off the plaque as the pet chew. While these diets are extremely effective in removing plaque, they must be fed daily in order to help prevent tartar buildup. If you cannot routinely brush your pet's teeth, you should consider feeding your pet one of these Science Diet products.
- ❖ For more severe periodontal disease, the doctor may prescribe CET gel. This is a prescription product, which is applied daily at first and then once weekly long term to help prevent further damage to the tooth by bacteria.
- ❖ Finally, Ora-Vet can be applied to your pet's teeth. Ora-Vet leaves a thin barrier on the tooth surface that prevents plaque and bacteria from attaching to the tooth. It leaves a very smooth finish to the tooth. We will also send home Ora-vet Home Care that is

applied once weekly. Ora-Vet not only can help reduce the frequency of professional dental cleaning, but also the amount of time required to perform a dentistry procedure, therefore reducing the time your pet is under anesthesia.

❖ Information provided by Dr. Denise Smith D.V.M.