



DENTAL CARE FOR YOUR PET

Gum (or periodontal) disease is one of the most common problems seen by veterinarians today. Besides bad breath, gum disease can lead to loss of appetite, weight loss, serious generalized infections, and even heart and kidney disease.

The problems begin when plaque and tartar are allowed to build up on a pet's teeth. Plaque harbors the bacteria, which can lead to infection.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POOR ORAL HEALTH

- Persistent foul mouth odor
- Inflamed gum line (red, swollen or tender)
- Plaque formation (may not be obvious)
- Tartar formation (creamy-brown, hard material on the tooth surface)
- Bleeding, receded or eroded gums
- Loose teeth
- Infected teeth (discharge between teeth and gums)
- Missing teeth

If any of the above signs appear, contact your veterinarian for an oral examination.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

The first step in promoting oral health is to have your pet's hardened tartar removed by your veterinarian. This requires the use of special instruments and equipment under anesthetic. You may wish to include a fluoride treatment with the dental to help prevent further tartar buildup. Second, most veterinarians recommend an oral hygiene program that includes brushing your pet's teeth on a regular basis with a toothpaste formulated for animals. **Do Not Use Human Toothpaste. Do Not Use Baking Soda.** Human toothpaste contains ingredients, which may cause upset stomachs and/or foaming in the mouth. The high sodium level of baking soda may cause problems in some animals, especially those with a heart condition.

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to establish a pleasant routine for you and your pet. Start your dental program slowly. Begin by simply handling your pet's mouth several minutes a day. Go slowly and be affectionate. After a few weeks of rubbing teeth and gums with your finger, you can introduce a more abrasive rub. Use a small piece of gauze or nylon stocking material wrapped around your finger. Try this step several times a week, increasing the duration, as your pet will allow. At this time gradually introduce the dental paste. Weeks later, you will be ready to use the toothbrush. Lift the lip on one side of the mouth and brush the teeth and gums. Brushing gently in a back and forth motion is more effective. Increase the number of teeth brushed each time until your cat accepts the routine willingly. The whole process should take only 30 seconds.

Use of specially flavored animal toothpaste is often helpful. To ensure gentle application, always use an extra-soft bristled toothbrush designed for animal use. Dental products may be purchased at our hospital. Technicians or veterinarians are available to help you if you have any questions or problems. Good luck!