



Dental Hygiene

First the good news: Cats and dogs seldom develop cavities as do humans. However, the dog and cat are not without a major dental problem! In fact, the most common dental problem that we find in pets is considered far worse than cavities! It is called "PERIODONTAL DISEASE." This disease affects the gums and other tissue around the teeth instead of the teeth themselves.

About 75% of all dental problems serious enough to be seen by a veterinarian, are the result of periodontal disease. It is the cause of 95% of all cases of "bad breath". In advanced cases, it results in infected, foul-smelling, loosened teeth, with a massive unsightly accumulation of tartar. Often there is a loss of appetite due to painful gums. Even signs such as diarrhea, vomiting and irritability may be the result of this disease.

Food material, bacteria, and saliva accumulate and adhere to the tooth surface, forming a soft "plaque". This material can be easily removed at this point. However, if buildup is allowed to continue, it becomes hard and "chalk-like" from its mineral content. The tartar buildup causes erosion of the gums, with subsequent inflammation and infection of the tooth socket. The teeth then become loose, and may even fall out. The gums become reddened, swollen, and bleed easily. Animals often salivate excessively from the associated pain.

This condition becomes very painful, as well as causing it to be unpleasant due to the bad mouth odor. Rapid buildup of tartar is PRIMARILY due to ACIDITY of the saliva--not what the pet eats! The more acid in the saliva, the quicker the buildup of plaque.

The buildup of this material allows bacteria to constantly grow in the infected mouth tissue. These bacteria may enter the bloodstream through the bleeding gums, and cause such problems as: heart valve infections (endocarditic) and kidney infections (nephritis).

Follow these steps for your pet's good oral hygiene

1. Feed at least some hard food, which provides a cleaning action. Prescription Diet t/d is available for both dogs and cats and can be used as a treat every day. Friskies now has an adult cat food available at the grocery store to help keep teeth clean.
2. Have teeth examined at least once every year for tartar buildup. Pets vary considerably in the amount of tartar that accumulates.
3. Use a pet dentifrice on a regular basis. We will be happy to recommend what is best for your pet. CET Chews are available for both dogs and cats. Pet toothpaste is available. Human toothpaste should not be used since it is toxic if swallowed by pets.

These recommendations could possibly do more to prolong the life of your pet and make it more enjoyable than anything else you can do!

PLEASE CONSULT OUR CLINIC AT 770-977-9000 IF YOUR PET EXPERIENCES ANY DENTAL PROBLEMS.