

Moyock Animal Hospital, Inc

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DENTAL CARE and INFORMATION



Our pet's teeth are very similar in composition to ours. Canine (dog) and Feline (cat) teeth have ENAMEL (the protective outer coating), DENTIN (the hard "core" material), ROOTS (to hold the tooth in place), and a PULP CANAL (location of the nerves and blood vessels). We decrease the amount of plaque and tartar accumulation on our teeth by daily brushing; however, our pet's teeth don't typically get daily attention. It is this plaque and tartar accumulation that causes many problems. Early detection and preventative dental care is much preferable to dealing with the problems that dental disease (also known as "PERIODONTAL DISEASE") will cause.

PLAQUE, TARTAR, and GINGIVITIS

PLAQUE is a colorless film made up of bacteria, proteins, sugars, minerals, and water. This film forms naturally on the teeth and gums and accumulates over time. Some of the plaque mixes with food particles and saliva and then hardens into a tough, yellow-brown, "crusty" material called TARTAR.

Both plaque and tartar begin to damage the gum line around the base of the tooth and create inflammation...this inflammation is called GINGIVITIS (just like in people). Gingivitis can then progress into cavities and infection of the tooth root which will lead to loosening of the root structure and eventual loss of the tooth.

What problems will all this cause for my pet?

The first and most noticeable problem that gingivitis and dental disease leads to is bad breath, a sore mouth, and lost teeth. Your pet's appetite may decrease and his or her ability to consume hard food may decline. As the plaque and tartar remain in contact with the enamel of the tooth, that enamel will become damaged and "pitted". This "pitting" creates a rough surface which results in continued accumulation of tartar and becomes a permanent change to the surface of the tooth.

As dental disease continues, the bacteria that is associated with the plaque and tartar finds its way into the blood vessels of the gumline (due to the gingivitis). This bacteria is now in the cardiovascular system and travels all through out the body. This bacteria can get trapped within the small blood vessels of the heart valves, kidneys, liver, and other organ systems.

Dental disease is the # 1 cause of non-hereditary heart disease in dogs and the # 1 cause of non-hereditary kidney disease in cats.

Infection and damage is most common in the heart and kidneys, however, it can also occur in other systems. The most common locations in addition to the heart and kidneys are the nervous system, the liver, and the lungs. Many of these problems can become permanent if left untreated and may not be completely treatable in advanced stages. Because of the dangers of these more serious problems caused by dental disease, we strongly recommend preventative dental care.

How do I know if my pet has dental disease or gingivitis?

Look for these warning signs:

- ❶ BAD BREATH
- ❷ RED and SWOLLEN GUMS, the appearance of a PINK LINE along the gumline
- ❸ A YELLOW-BROWN CRUST on the teeth (this is TARTAR)
- ❹ PAIN or BLEEDING when your pet eats or chews on toys
- ❺ DECREASED APPETITE or DIFFICULTY EATING
- ❻ LOOSE or MISSING TEETH

What can I do at home to help PREVENT Dental disease?

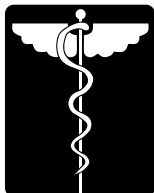
Prevention can start at home. Some patients will allow you to brush their teeth on a regular basis (everyday is best...just like in people). There are many pet toothbrushes on the market as well as flavored toothpastes made especially for dogs and cats (don't use people toothpaste). Gently brush the surface of the teeth – concentrate especially on the back teeth, they tend to accumulate plaque and tartar faster than the front teeth. Use a circular motion if possible and remember to get close to the gums.

Feeding dry food and avoiding table or soft canned food will help to decrease plaque and tartar accumulation. Soft foods will cling to the teeth and cause much faster accumulation of plaque which can rapidly create dental disease. Crunchy treats, chew toys, and treats specially designed to reduce plaque (such as “C.E.T.” chews) can also help.

When do I need to pursue a PROFESSIONAL DENTAL CLEANING?

A professional dental cleaning is performed for two reasons: 1. As a preventative procedure to remove mild to moderate plaque and tartar accumulation before it causes problems, and 2. As a treatment procedure to correct dental disease. The second situation is often in addition to more extensive procedures such as tooth extractions, gum reconstruction, and deep cleaning under the gum line. We highly recommend preventative dental care and cleaning in order to avoid the more extensive treatment required once dental disease occurs.

We can perform an oral exam on your pet at any time to assess dental health. Cleaning and treatment recommendations are made according to each patient's specific condition and dental needs. The need for and frequency of dental cleanings depends on age, diet, genetics, and home care practices.



The dental cleaning is performed under general anesthesia (your pet is sound asleep) and routinely includes an ultra-sonic dental scaling (with a tiny “pressure washer”) to remove all the plaque and tartar, an extensive oral examination to look for any hidden cavities, infections, broken teeth, etc., and a fluoride treatment to smooth, polish, and protect the teeth. More extensive procedures (such as tooth removal) can be performed if needed.

Keeping our pet's teeth and gums in good health is vital to preventing many problems before they happen. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have ANY questions concerning your pet's dental care!