



DENTAL DISEASE IN DOGS AND CATS

Before we domesticated the family pooch and puss, they were hunting animals. Tearing at carcasses no doubt kept their teeth cleaner than tinned food and crunchies do today. In today's family situation and with modern medicine pets are also living much longer lives. So dental disease can become a major problem.

Dental problems in pets are most typically seen as dental plaque, tartar and gum inflammation that is known as gingivitis. Lets have a look at what all this means....

PLAQUE AND TARTAR

Dogs and cats can't clean their teeth like we can and so plaque gradually begins to form on the sides of teeth. It's a mixture of minerals and salts from the saliva glands, food particles and bacteria. The problem is that once it starts, new plaque builds up on old. Soon enough there can be a yellow-grey look and furry feel to the sides of teeth as tartar builds up. This tartar is rock hard and bonds to the tooth enamel.

BAD BREATH

Before you see the build up, you will usually smell it, and a friendly lick becomes no fun at all. The bacteria love growing in plaque, and as the tartar pushes back the gum line, infection sets in between the teeth and gums.

GINGIVITIS

The reddening, swelling and infection of the gums is called gingivitis. It's not just the smell that's the problem, the gums start to recede, destabilising teeth and abscesses develop. This infection and tooth decay causes discomfort, pain and eventually problems eating, and if things get worse, no teeth at all.

WHAT CAN THE VET DO?

Unfortunately, Scruffy or Fluffy aren't good at sitting patiently with their mouth open so that we can scale their teeth. That's why they need an anaesthetic to have the job done properly. Tartar can be cleaned off by using an ultrasonic scaler, similar to that used by your own dentist. The Gingival pockets are scraped out and irrigated with chlorhexadine. The teeth are then polished to slow the return of the tartar build up. Any badly affected teeth that are abscessing or are destabilised can be removed. Your pet may also require a short course of antibiotics to control or prevent any infection in the treated gums. If any teeth have been removed, think of it as if you had just had a tooth removed. It's best to feed soft food for the first few days.

PREVENTION?

This is very important to reduce the tartar build up in the future and put off the time that they will need to come in for another clean and scale and course reduce the cost in you having to doing so. As with us. plaque is the main enemy. There are a several things you can do to slow its build-up:

- There are flavoured enzymatic toothpastes and special brushes to brush your pet's teeth with (if they are cooperative). This can significantly slow the tartar build up. Do not use human toothpastes, as these can cause stomach upsets, as they tend to swallow a lot of it.
- Oral Mouth rinses and gels are a wonderful new product that has a similar effect to the use of toothpastes, but there is no brushing involved. It is tasteless so it is much more agreeable. It is simply applied to your pet's teeth and gums daily, and also helps with bad breath.
- Other helpful products include Hills T/D diet an excellent complete dry food available for dogs and cats. The larger biscuit has been re-designed to not crumble when bitten into thus scraping the teeth and gums when eaten. Especially good for cats as they often don't tolerate the first two! Please ask us if a free sample is available.
- Other preventions include encouraging your pet to chew. A great product is "GREENIES". A fully digestible chew that is more irresistible than a Schmacko and great for keeping teeth clean and breath fresh.
- Large raw bones that can't be swallowed, chicken wings for cats. **REMEMBER NEVER TO FEED COOKED BONES** - once cooked, the structure of bones change from chewy to brittle, splintering and these can cause all sorts of problems in the digestive system.
- If none of these are possible there is a special solution that freshens breath and reduces plaque called "AQUADENT". It is simply added to your pet's drinking water - easy!!

We are happy to help your with any questions you may have about any of these products - Please just ask!