

## Dental Homecare

One of the most overlooked aspects in preventative health maintenance is dental care. It is very important to the health of your pet. Dogs and cats do have problems with their teeth. Many of these problems are very slow in onset. Reluctance to eat, odor from the mouth, loss of energy, and reluctance to play are a few signs of possible dental disease.

Periodontal disease is the most common cause of dental problems. Periodontal disease starts as an invisible glycoprotein layer on the tooth surface. Bacteria use this layer to attach to the tooth surface in a substance called plaque. Dead attached bacteria form calculus, which harbors additional bacteria. As these bacteria grow on the surface of the tooth they start to enter the gingival tissues. Bacteria produce toxins that injure the tissue.

As periodontal disease progresses, bacteria enter deeper into the soft tissue and destruction of the periodontium (supporting tissues of the tooth) begins. Bone holding the tooth in place recedes as the inflammatory process progresses. Serious problems occur at this time, resulting in destruction of the periodontium, making the tooth loose and painful. The gingival infection results in a discharge of debris, organisms, and toxins into the blood stream, possibly affecting the liver, heart, lungs, or kidneys.

Prevention and management of periodontal disease begins at home by training your pet to accept the cleaning of their teeth. Establish a routine of daily brushing your pet's teeth with a soft toothbrush. Use a circular motion with the emphasis of the stroke away from the gum line.

To get your pet used to tooth brushing, use a beef or chicken broth solution or water with a small amount of garlic powder added. CET Toothpaste can also be used, and there are several palatable flavors available. First coat the brush with the "yummy." Without restraint, allow the pet to lick the brush 3 – 5 times per day. Once the licking is established, try brushing the teeth, as the pet licks the brush. Gradually, as familiarity with the brush is established, you can start restraining and more vigorous brushing. If you can't brush your pet's teeth at home, let us know, we will be happy to give you additional brushing instructions.

While not a complete substitute for brushing, T/D Diet (Hills) has been proven to decrease the rate of calculus and plaque formation as has the CET Aquadent water additive. Please discuss this with our staff or your veterinarian if you are interested in trying a dietary approach in the control of calculus and plaque build-up.

Home oral hygiene is important to maintain your pet's dental health between professional cleaning. The frequency of professional cleaning will vary with your pet's individual needs.