

HOPE



VETERINARY CLINIC

DENTAL CARE FOR CATS AND DOGS

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In order to maintain optimal health, all animals need healthy teeth and gums, and the same rules apply to animals as to humans: minimize risks of dental disease by feeding a nutritious diet, avoiding sugars and including oral hygiene in routine care.

BEGINNING A HOME ORAL HYGIENE PROGRAM

The best way to become familiar with a cat or dog's mouth is to check it for signs of change. Periodically, lift the lips a little in order to observe the teeth and gums. Normal teeth should be white or off-white, with gums light pink and smooth. Tarter appears as a brown coating on the teeth, usually starting on the back teeth and eventually covering all the teeth.:

TOOTH BRUSHING

Although dogs are usually more receptive to tooth brushing than cats, many people establish a routine of tooth brushing with cats. The Cornell Veterinary School website and the Virbac Animal Health websites have excellent online videos on teeth brushing for cats and dogs respectively: http://partnersah.vet.cornell.edu/pet/fhc/brushing_teeth
www.virbacvet.com/cet/focus/

TOOTHPASTES: There are a number of pet toothpastes on the market with meat flavors that pets like. Pet toothpastes contain active ingredients including dual enzyme systems that provide anti-bacterial properties. Human toothpastes can cause stomach upsets in animals so avoid using them on pets.

TOOTHBRUSHES, SPONGES, AND PADS: Various dental tools are available. The choice of what to use depends on the health of your pet's gums, mouth size and your ability to get inside the mouth to clean the teeth. Toothbrushes designed specifically for pets have smaller, ultra-soft bristles and are shaped for

AN ANIMAL'S MOUTH. FINGER TOOTHBRUSHES, DENTAL PADS OR SPONGES ARE EASIER FOR MANY PEOPLE TO USE AS THEY FEEL LESS STRANGE TO ANIMALS. THE MORE OFTEN YOU BRUSH THE BETTER. EVEN BRUSHING EVERY OTHER DAY OR WEEKLY WILL REMOVE MUCH OF THE PLAQUE BEFORE IT HAS HAD TIME TO MINERALIZE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHEWING

The effects of gingivitis and periodontal disease in cats is especially far reaching. This is probably due to dogs' natural tendency to chew. The chewing action strengthens their jaws and acts as an abrasive to remove tartar and plaque build-up on the teeth and along the gum line. Cats are not natural chewers so finding things for cats to chew on is more challenging.

CARROTS, BONES AND ROPE TOYS

For dogs, bones, bully sticks, rope and carrots are great teeth cleaning treats. Gnawing is an excellent way to clean the back teeth, and crunching carrots helps to clean all teeth. Some cats also enjoy gnawing on bones and rope toys appropriate to their size. It is critically important to supervise these activities to prevent accidental ingestion. Always try to purchase treats and toys that are organic and free from chemicals and preservatives. Also check the country of origin before feeding any treat to a pet as we continue to hear reports of dogs becoming sick after eating imported treats that include melamine.

DENTAL TREATS

Virbac CET chews are rawhide infused with antimicrobial properties which is transferred to the teeth when the rawhide is chewed. Greenies contain enzymes that promote helpful bacteria.

Wysong Dentatreat and Vetri-Science Perio-Support: These powders contain enzymes that can help stimulate the growth of "good" bacteria in the mouth,

thus controlling the build up of plaque and tarter. A small amount sprinkled on food can help in the overall maintenance of good oral hygiene. People who have used these chews and powders report that they notice a decrease in tarter build up. Some animals with sensitive stomachs have reacted with loose stool, however, so monitoring is advised.

NUTRITION

Feeding a high quality human-grade diet and avoiding giving treats with sugars or preservatives will help control the amount of harmful bacteria in the mouth. Read labels! Animals do not need sugar, coloring or preservatives to enjoy a treat. These are added to appeal to the purchaser and are detrimental to the health of animals.

DENTAL SURGERIES

According to the American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS), 70% of cats show signs of oral disease by age three, and 85% of all adult pets have periodontal disease. Dental disease is not simply suffering from bad breath. Left untreated, harmful bacteria from the oral cavity can spread throughout the bloodstream to infect the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys. Diseased teeth and gums are painful and limit an animal's appetite because of difficulty chewing. Pets may not show obvious signs of tooth pain. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the following symptoms to get your pet appropriate medical attention:

- Malodorous (bad) breath
- Discolored teeth
- Drooling, often with foul-smelling saliva
- Appearance of dental plaque or tartar
- Reluctance to eat or reduced appetite
- Teeth that "chatter" (especially in cats)
- Tooth loss
- Broken or fractured teeth.

DENTAL SURGERY

By about middle age, most animals benefit from dental surgeries to clean the teeth, remove damaged teeth and return the mouth to health. Recently Hope clients David and Mary brought in their three cats for dental x-rays. David, a human dentist, expressed surprise when he saw the condition of their cat's mouths. After the surgery, David reported that Mimi, their eldest girl acted five years younger, jumping off the ground to play with a cat toy. "Most important has been her change of personality. The grumpiness and hissing around her brothers and sisters has decreased by 90%. We can only conclude that she had been uncomfortable with her mouth for a very long time."

PRIOR TO DENTAL SURGERY

As dental surgery can last anywhere from 1–3 hours, it is important that animals be medically cleared for the procedure. Hope Vet requires all candidates for dental surgery to undergo an examination and blood work to ensure that the pet is safe to undergo anesthesia.

THE DENTAL SURGERY

Hope Vet's Dental Suite includes a dental radiograph and a sophisticated dental machine with an ultrasonic scaler. Our dental surgery staff is fully trained in all aspects of veterinary dentistry and anesthesia. Two staff members are in attendance at all times to ensure safety, manage pain and minimize complications.

During the dental the following procedures occur:

- Thorough oral examination and radiographs
- Tooth extractions if necessary.
- Gingivectomy (a gingival graft)
- Cleaning and doxyrobe treatment
- Polishing and fluoride treatment

After the dentistry, staff discharge the patient with short term painkillers and make recommendations that will help decrease future tarter buildup.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why must my pet undergo general anesthesia?

On sleeping animals we can place endotracheal tubes to prevent lung infections. We can also perform a more thorough examination and do more effective treatments than we can if a pet is awake. Finally it eliminates any fear factor for the pet, permitting the pet to awaken feeling as refreshed and comfortable as possible.

Isn't anesthesia dangerous?

There are always some risks with general anesthesia. However, Hope's emphasis on using multimodal anesthesia techniques reduces the risk significantly. We use a variety of local sedatives as well as oxygen and fluids to provide the safest anesthesia with the fastest recovery time.

Why can dental cleanings be more expensive than human cleanings?

The cost of dental care for pets has risen over the years due to the increase in the use of complex medical technology, including dental radiographs, blood pressure monitors, fluid pumps, and ultrasonic scalers. Most of this equipment is unnecessary for humans because humans do not undergo general anesthesia and receive routine cleanings which are not as complicated or extensive as those performed on animals.

If extractions are performed will my pet still be able to eat?

The short answer is yes! Our goal is for pet mouths to be free of infection. It is much better for them to be without some teeth than to have broken or infected teeth or gums. Pets are able to eat a normal diet while missing many teeth. It is also possible to perform root canals if teeth are savable.