

**HOLT VETERINARY CLINIC
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YOUR PET AND DENTAL HEALTH

The importance of dental health and its relationship to the well-being of cats and dogs is easily overlooked. In fact, dental disease is one of the leading causes of poor health and shortened life spans in pets. The most common problem seen in cats and dogs is periodontal disease, which is associated with as many as 95% of all cases of bad breath. In advanced cases, periodontal disease causes infected, foul smelling loosened teeth, massive unsightly accumulations of tartar, and total loss of appetite.

WHY DOES MY PET NEED DENTAL CARE? Since your pet does not brush his/her teeth, debris and tartar accumulate around the gums and cause pain, redness and all too frequently, abscess formation, bone damage, and eventual loss of teeth. Permanent kidney or heart damage can result from untreated tooth and gum infections. Even such remote symptoms as diarrhea, vomiting, and irritability may be the result of long-standing periodontal disease.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY PET NEEDS DENTAL CARE? Each year when your pet is vaccinated for distemper, we make it a point to include a thorough examination of the gums and teeth. If care is needed, we will advise you at that time. At home, you should be alert to mouth odor, pain, swelling, redness or build-up of tartar, a hard substance made up of dental plaque and precipitate from saliva. Additional symptoms to be alert to are; bleeding gums, stains on the teeth, ulcers, sores on gums, loose, cracked or broken teeth. If your pet has any of these symptoms, schedule a dental exam.

CAN THIS PROBLEM BE SERIOUS? Severe dental disease is one of the most frequent problems in middle-aged and older pets and often leads to other diseases. Infected areas in the mouth provide a way for bacteria to enter the blood stream. Each year,

numerous cases of heart, kidney and bone disease, anemia and even death result from problems originating in the mouth. These problems can begin shortly after the permanent teeth have erupted around six months of age. With proper care and diet, diseased teeth and gums can be prevented.

WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR MY PET'S TEETH? If dentistry is scheduled, bring your pet to the clinic in the morning - **NO BREAKFAST**. Under gas anesthesia, the tartar is removed in a manner similar to that for humans. Then the teeth are polished to retard future tartar build-up. Any teeth that are loose or diseased beyond repair are extracted. Older pets may need lab work performed to determine if kidney or heart damage has occurred. Intravenous fluids are frequently administered. Your pet is then allowed to rest comfortably and is released to your care in the afternoon. If antibiotics are prescribed, be sure you give **all** the medication to your pet as directed.

The need for dental cleaning varies greatly with the individual pet, but the majority need care every two or three years. (This is equivalent to a human needing dental care every 14 to 21 years.) Many pets require cleaning every year.

WILL MY PET BE IN PAIN? Because dentistry is performed under anesthesia, your pet will feel no pain. Any pain from infected teeth will usually be gone a few hours after the problem teeth have been treated.

HOW ABOUT OTHER PROCEDURES? At home, be alert to any changes from healthy mouth appearance and odor. A proper diet, with minimal treats from your table, also enhances the dental health of your pet. It is beneficial to regularly clean the outer surfaces of your pet's teeth, using a moist terry washcloth or soft child's tooth brush and a product specially formulated for cats and dogs.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.
PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY