We are committed to keeping your pet’s teeth as healthy as possible. The condition of the oral cavity of each pet is different and treatments will be adjusted to fit their needs.

Veterinary medical dental care is an essential component of a preventive healthcare plan. Quality dental care is necessary to provide optimum health and quality of life. If left untreated, diseases of the oral cavity are painful and can contribute to other local or systemic diseases.

What is involved when your pet visits the dentist? Your beloved pet’s visit with the dentist is a lot more than removing tartar from teeth. Our goal is to restore your four-legged family member’s mouth to its normal, fresh, healthy state! Having your pet’s teeth professionally evaluated and cleaned is one of the most important medical treatments you can invest in that will result in long-term good health.

It is always important to have your pet’s teeth professionally cleaned, but many times that is not the primary treatment your pet needs. Many pets have other dental problems that predispose them to an unhealthy mouth. A thorough oral exam allows your veterinarian to identify tooth malformations, malocclusions (misaligned teeth), gum disease, oral masses, and other diseases that might contribute to your pet’s dental disease.

Periodontal disease is one of the most common diseases in the dog and cat and is easily prevented by daily tooth brushing! A healthy mouth leads to a healthy pet, fresh breath, and a happy family!
"Preventing plaque helps prevent periodontal disease."

Periodontal Disease

It all starts with plaque...

Periodontal disease is actually a group of diseases that affect the tissues that support and anchor the teeth. It is the result of the inflammatory response to dental plaque. It is the most common oral disease seen in small animal practice with the great majority of dogs and cats over the age of three years having a degree of disease that warrants intervention. If left untreated, this disease results in destruction of the gums, alveolar bone, and periodontal ligaments which ultimately leads to loss of teeth.

Plaque is the primary cause of periodontal disease. Dental plaque is a biofilm of bacteria and their by-products, salivary components, oral debris, and the occasional epithelial and inflammatory cells. Accumulation of plaque starts within minutes on a clean tooth surface!

Periodontal disease is a progressive disease caused by plaque, which leads to gingivitis and then periodontitis. Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums and is the earliest sign of disease. If left untreated, your pet may develop periodontitis, which destroys the periodontal ligament and alveolar bone, ultimately causing loss of the affected tooth. Thus, gingivitis is inflammation that is not associated with destruction (loss) of supporting tissue and is reversible. However, periodontitis is inflammation where the tooth has lost its support (attachment), and is therefore irreversible.

Preventing accumulation of plaque with regular dental cleanings helps prevent periodontal disease. The goal of dental cleanings is to eliminate or reduce the bacterial plaque to a level below disease threshold.

Healthy gums means a healthy mouth

Undisturbed plaque accumulation results in gingivitis. Some individuals with untreated gingivitis will develop periodontitis, but it cannot be predicted which of those individuals will do so. However, it is known that animals with clinically healthy gums will not develop periodontitis. Therefore, the goal in periodontal disease prevention and treatment is to establish and maintain clinically healthy gums to prevent periodontitis.
Anesthesia

- A complete oral examination can only be performed under general anesthesia. Before anesthesia, a general health and preliminary oral examination will be performed in order to identify obvious health and oral issues.
- An anesthetic workup is done beforehand to ensure your pet is healthy enough for anesthesia. This workup may include blood work, urinalysis, chest x-rays, and/or an electrocardiogram (EKG) of the heart to evaluate what is going on inside your pet's body.
- During anesthesia, intravenous (IV) fluids will be given to help maintain proper blood flow to internal organs and tissues. All vital signs including EKG, blood pressure, and temperature will be continuously monitored during the anesthetic procedure. Additional warmth (if needed) can be provided by a gentle stream of warmed air or a warm-water blanket.
- After the cleaning and treatments are completed, your pet will be awakened from general anesthesia. Post-operative monitoring will continue until your pet is discharged from the hospital.
- Pain control: If your pet had any extractions, gingivoplasty, or fracture repair, we will prescribe some form of analgesia such as Rimadyl (carprofen) or tramadol. Rimadyl is an anti-inflammatory. Side effects include gastrointestinal ulcers and liver damage. If your pet becomes inappetent or you see bloody stool, please call us so we can alter the medications.
- Antibiotics: If your pet had any extractions or fracture repair, we will prescribe an antibiotic that is good for oral bacteria such as Antirobe (clindamycin) to prevent infection that could lead to incision dehiscence (failure).

The Dental Cleaning

- It is much more than just cleaning teeth.
  A complete oral examination and dental charting will be performed. This charting includes noting any missing, loose, fractured, extra, or abnormal teeth. The surrounding soft tissues in the mouth will be checked for masses, abnormal gum tissue, or signs of infection. Teeth cleaning begins with removal of tartar from the crowns and is followed by cleaning the teeth below the gum line. Simply removing the tartar from the crowns makes the teeth look better, but cleaning the teeth below the gum line is extremely important for controlling dental disease.
  The sulcus around the teeth will be evaluated using an instrument called a periodontal probe. This measures the depth of the small pocket around each tooth and helps us determine if periodontal disease is affecting any of the teeth. Teeth with abnormal measurements will be x-rayed to determine what is going on below the gum line. Teeth affected with periodontal disease will be treated by cleaning the root surface and application of an antibiotic gel (Doxirobe™) or extracted, depending on the severity.

The Importance of X-rays

Any teeth noted to be fractured or missing will be x-rayed. Evaluation of missing teeth is necessary to determine if they were never formed, impacted, or if the crowns are fractured and the roots were left behind to become infected. Fractured teeth are x-rayed to determine if the pulp cavity has been compromised and needs root canal therapy or extraction. Fractured teeth should never be ignored as this could lead to an abscess and possibly cause disease in other body organs (liver, kidney, heart, etc). Fractures of the enamel and dentin that do not expose pulp can be treated with composites or sealants to prevent further damage. Intraoperative and postoperative pain management will be provided for your pet's oral health.

Polishing

After all teeth are appropriately treated, they are polished to remove any scratches that might be present on the crown. The teeth are completely dried and a barrier sealant (Oravet®) is applied to decrease the rate at which plaque attaches to the crown.
Dental health home care

Home care is extremely important in maintaining the oral health of your family friend!

When your pet is discharged, you will be provided instructions and home products for you to use. These products will vary as we attempt to find the right combination of home dental care that works best for you and your beloved four-legged family member. Below are examples of products we may recommend for your pet.

C.E.T Toothbrush and paste: Daily brushing is the gold standard for your pet's oral health care. Many different brushes exist for easier brushing including finger brushes, angled brushes, and dual-head brushes. Please make sure to use a veterinary paste product as human products are irritating your pet's stomach.

C.E.T Oral Hygiene rinse: This is an easy-to-use mouth rinse. Just place the applicator tip between the cheek and gums and apply. This is a great choice if your pet does not tolerate brushing the teeth.

Oravet Plaque Prevention Gel: This is a gel that is easily applied to the teeth with the applicator provided and takes less than 60 seconds of your time. It is applied weekly and helps prevent the plaque build-up that is the primary cause of periodontal disease.

Dental diets: There are two ways a dental diet may work: 1) chemical prevention or 2) mechanical removal of plaque. Most Eukanuba diets and IVD Dental formula diets contain sodium hexametaphosphate (HMP) which has an anti-mineralization effect on plaque. HMP is a micro-cleansing crystal that doesn't allow the bacteria biofilm to attach to the teeth by binding up calcium and phosphate, and therefore reduces the formation of calculus (mineralized plaque). Purina DH and Hill's TD are dental diets that work via mechanical removal of plaque each time your pet bites into the kibble. This is effective because the kibbles are hard and made of fibers that run in same direction so that the kibble does not crumble as your pet bites into it. Because your pet must bite through the kibble, this process scrapes the side of the tooth and cleans off plaque from your pet's teeth.

Dental treats: Dental health-promoting treats are an easy way to provide daily dental cleaning. Those such as C.E.T chews, C.E.T hextra chews, and Greenies are examples. It is important to choose the appropriate sized treat for your pet as many of the treats work by mechanical removal of plaque by enticing your pet to chew on them.