

DENTAL CARE:

Your animal's teeth are an important aspect to their overall health. Most animals that are two years old or older suffer from some form of periodontal disease. It is one of the most common ailments diagnosed by veterinarians. Periodontal disease is inflammation of the gums around the teeth. It is caused by the accumulation of plaque on the teeth that is composed mostly of bacteria. This plaque can harden into tartar. The buildup of tartar can cause infections that can lead to tooth loss. Bacteria from the oral cavity can enter the bloodstream through blood vessels in the gums and can cause systemic infections of the liver, kidney and heart. Some signs of periodontal disease include bad breath, tartar buildup, discolored teeth, red inflamed gums, loose teeth or tooth loss, and loss of appetite.

The first step in promoting oral health is to make an appointment for an oral examination. It may be necessary to have your pet's teeth cleaned above and below the gum line. This requires the animal to be placed under anesthesia. Most animals need yearly dental prophylaxis. We like to see animals for quarterly wellness exams and check their teeth and gums for signs of periodontal disease. During a dental cleaning, we clean the teeth with an ultrasonic scaler to remove plaque and tartar, we polish the teeth, and we do a fluoride or chlorhexidine treatment. We also have a state-of-the-art digital dental X-ray machine that allows us to see tooth and bone problems below the gumline. All animals are monitored while under anesthesia with an EKG, pulse oximeter, blood pressure monitor, and temperature probe. They are kept on heated warm water circulating blankets, and are placed in heated cages while waking up.

Regular brushing is the most important thing you can do at home to maintain your animal's healthy teeth and gums. Ideally, you should brush their teeth daily using a soft-bristled toothbrush and a toothpaste formulated just for animals. Do not use a human toothpaste as it can cause stomach upsets. Other products are available that can help prevent tartar buildup, but none are as effective as brushing. Other products include dental diets such as Hill's T/D, chlorhexidine rinses or gels that can be applied to the teeth, water additives that can help freshen breath and decrease the accumulation of plaque, and specialized chew treats that can help clean teeth.

Call for an appointment today, so we can assess your animal's teeth and get them on a dental program that works to keep them healthy.