

CANINE AND FELINE ANESTHESIA-FREE DENTAL CLEANINGS

With more than 85% of pets over the age of three suffering from some sort of dental disease, veterinarians are constantly reminding clients to provide at home dental care for their pets. In addition, we encourage semi-annual dental exams and necessary cleanings for our patients followed by care at home. Some clients are leery of anesthetics used for dental procedures. In response to client concerns, some people have developed Anesthesia-Free Pet Dentistry protocols.

There are many problems with this kind of dental cleaning. Many animals have to be physically restrained, leading to stress and fears. Veterinarians use ultrasonic scalers and sharp dental instruments. Even slight head movement by the patient could result in injury to the oral tissues of the patient, and the operator may be bitten when the patient reacts. This is one reason a general anesthetic is needed. Also, anesthesia allows for a more thorough procedure and a complete oral examination with proper visualization of the entire mouth and hard to see gingival areas.

Most non-anesthetic dental cleanings are done using some sort of sharp hand curette. These tools cause scarring and micropitting of the enamel. This can actually accelerate plaque retention and tarter build-up. Pets that have had this procedure done actually need to return for more frequent cleanings as a result of enamel damage. In a proper veterinary medical setting, dental cleanings are followed by a polishing step that helps remove the microscopic divots for the tooth enamel and creates a smooth healthy surface.

Another serious issue with anesthetic-free dental cleanings is that only the visible portions of the teeth can be cleaned. Areas under the gumline and on the insides of teeth will still have significant tarter and harbor harmful bacteria. In time, the underlying bone structure of the jaw can deteriorate and the pet may lose teeth. Under safe anesthesia, veterinarians are able to probe all areas of the mouth and use tools to remove plaque and bacteria from under the gumline. This actually stops the disease process. At the same time, dental x-rays can be done to help find problems under the gum line. Removal of dental tarter on the visible surfaces of the teeth has little effect on a pet's health, and provides a false sense of accomplishment. The effect is purely cosmetic.

Another issue with anesthetic-free dental cleanings is that many nonprofessionals or groomers claim to offer the service. Only licensed veterinarians can practice veterinary medicine. This includes veterinary surgery, medicine, and dentistry. Anyone providing dental services other than a licensed veterinarian, or a supervised and trained veterinary technician, is practicing veterinary medicine without a license and is subject to criminal charges.

Anesthesia-free dental services are completely inadequate for the long term health of your pet. Veterinary dental services offered at Kipling Veterinary Hospital allow for complete assessment, diagnosis, and appropriate treatment of dental disease to ensure your pet's dental health. We take all precautions to ensure that we provide the highest standard of care, following a custom tailored anesthesia plan for your pet, using state-of-the-art monitoring equipment to ensure the safety of your pet.