

## DENTAL CARE

Your pet's teeth are an important aspect to their overall health. Most pets that are two years old or older suffer from some degree of periodontal disease, inflammation of the gums around the teeth. It is one of the most common ailments diagnosed by veterinarians. Periodontal disease is caused by the accumulation of plaque on the teeth that is composed mostly of bacteria. This plaque can harden into tartar, which can cause infections that 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. We like to see pets for quarterly wellness exams and check their teeth and gums for signs of periodontal disease. It may be necessary to have your pet's teeth cleaned above and below the gum line. This requires the pet to be placed under anesthesia. Most pets need yearly dental prophylaxis. During a dental cleaning, we clean the teeth with an ultrasonic scaler to remove plaque and tartar, polish the teeth, and do a fluoride or chlorhexidine treatment. We also have a state-of-the-art digital dental x-ray unit that allows us to see tooth and bone problems below the gumline. All pets 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 pet's healthy teeth and gums. Ideally, you should brush their teeth daily using a soft-bristled toothbrush and toothpaste formulated just for animals. Do not use human toothpaste as it can cause stomach upset. 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 Prescription Diet 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 dental treats that can help clean teeth.

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