



Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Your Pet's Dental Procedure

Q. Do you have to put my pet under using anesthesia to perform dental work?

A: In order for the doctors to appropriately diagnose and treat your pet's oral disease, sedation or general anesthesia is usually necessary. Safety is our number one priority. The proper administration of pain medication before, during and after your pet's surgery can reduce the pain and anxiety associated with the procedure.

The doctors design an individualized anesthesia protocol based upon the results of preoperative laboratory tests, the specific oral disease being treated in your pet, and any concomitant health condition (i.e., heart, kidney or liver disease) your pet may have. An appropriately designed, administered and monitored anesthesia protocol can dramatically decrease the risk associated with anesthesia.

A trained veterinary staff member continuously monitors the anesthesia while the doctors are working on your pet. All patients receive an intravenous catheter and fluids under anesthesia. Patients receiving general anesthesia are intubated with an endotracheal tube to secure their airway and to prevent the aspiration of water used during the dental procedure.

Q. What is a dental cleaning?

A. During a dental cleaning (sometime called prophylaxis) plaque and tartar are removed from a pet's teeth, and the health of the entire mouth (tongue, gums, lips and teeth) is assessed. We have a state of the art dental equipment that includes an ultrasonic cleaner and digital radiographs. Dental cleaning includes removal of visible plaque and tartar, elimination of plaque and tartar from under the gums, probing of dental sockets, polishing to smooth enamel surfaces that may attract bacteria, inspection of lips , tongue, and entire mouth for growths and wounds, before and after cleaning photos of your pet's mouth and dental charting so the progression of dental disease can be monitored.

Q. Our dog has a fractured tooth and doesn't seem bothered by it; do we really need to have it treated?

A: Yes, especially if the internal portion of the tooth or pulp is involved. The pulp of the tooth contains the blood vessels and nerves of the tooth. Teeth with pulp exposure are painful. When the pulp of a tooth is exposed, bacteria can enter into the tooth and infect the pulp. Often, there are no notable outward symptoms (facial swelling) until very late in the course of the infection. Because the infection is localized at the root tip (tooth root abscess), and since the tooth root is hidden from view within the jaw bone, the classic sign of facial swelling is not seen until the infection has worked its way through the jaw bone overlying the root.

Q. We were shocked that our veterinarian recommended tooth extraction for our pet, why aren't there other treatment options?

A: When periodontal disease is left untreated, tooth loss becomes a reality for many pets. Many clients are shocked that their family veterinarian has advised extraction for a compromised tooth. At face value, this indeed may seem drastic, since we often reflect on our own health/dental care experiences to make sense of our pet's medical care. When detected at the severe stages of periodontal disease, where significant amounts of bone and soft tissue have been lost along the roots of the tooth, the options for saving teeth are extremely limited, and tooth extraction is often the only course of action to restore oral health. If the diseased tooth is not treated or extracted, neighboring teeth may be compromised.

Q. How often should I get my pet's teeth professionally cleaned?

A: Most domestic pets can benefit from annual professional dental cleanings performed under general anesthesia. In particular cases, a more frequent treatment interval may be necessary.

Q: Will my pet be able to eat normally, enjoy doggie biscuits and bones after having extractions?

A: In general, dogs and cats manage extremely well following extractions, but for our patients' comfort following extraction(s) we recommend a soft food (can or water-soaked kibble) diet for the first 2 weeks postoperative. After this immediate postoperative period has passed, most pets resume their normal preference of diet. Many pets with severe dental disease have been suffering silently with low-grade chronic pain for years, and following extractions, many clients report an improved quality of life and vigor in their pet.

Q: When should I start dental care with my pet?

A: The earlier the better. Your veterinarian can teach you how to care for your pet's teeth and gums early on as well as how to keep an eye out for indicators of dental problems. Starting early is especially important for the small breed dog population. Small breed dogs are especially prone to periodontal disease. For their size, small dogs have relatively large teeth for their jaws, resulting in crowding and an unfavorable environment where plaque and tartar can readily accumulate between teeth, thereby exacerbating periodontal disease

Q: How many teeth do dogs and cats have?

A: Dogs start out with 28 deciduous (baby) teeth; cats start out with 26 deciduous teeth. By six months of age, these baby teeth fall out and are replaced by permanent teeth, 42 in the dog and 30 in the cat.

Q. What is the benefit of chlorhexidine in a dental chew?

A. Chlorhexidine controls bacteria, fungi and viruses. It inhibits plaque and works for up 12 hours.

Please call Emily, our lead dental technician, at any time for any questions or concerns about your pet's dental procedure. Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill 860-563-1027

