

## Dental Care

### What IS periodontal disease?

- Periodontal disease is a disease caused by bacterial plaque accumulation. Plaque is a soft, sticky film that consists of bacteria, saliva and food particles which adheres to the teeth. If plaque is not removed then it begins to mineralize into calculus or tartar. This is the hard yellow or brown deposit that becomes cemented onto the teeth and cannot be removed by brushing alone.

### What are the effects of periodontal disease on my pet?

- The first signs of periodontal disease include:
  - *Foul-smelling breath* - caused by the large amounts of bacteria found in your pet's mouth.
  - *Excess salivation* - an animal suffering from the disease may secrete a large amount of saliva.
  - *Difficulty feeding* - the gums are inflamed and irritated and the teeth sensitive. Painful chewing may prevent your pet from eating properly.
- Serious effects:
  - *Teeth loosen and can even fall out* - following the destruction of the periodontal ligament by oral bacteria, there is nothing left to hold the teeth and they sometimes fall out. This is painful.
  - *Abscess formation* - this happens at the root of the tooth.
  - *Secondary infection in other organs* - the heart, lungs, kidneys and liver can all be affected by the entry of bacteria into the blood system.

### What dental care can I give my pet?

- Homecare procedures such as tooth brushing, attention to the type of diet, and dental supplements, all have a major part to play in the prevention of plaque buildup and overall oral health. Homecare needs to be consistent as plaque builds up all the time and needs to be managed daily. ***Our home care recommendations:***
  - **Brushing** - Gold standard care – Frequent plaque removal will prevent the start of periodontal disease and tooth brushing is considered the single most effective method for removing this plaque. Only pet designed brushes and pastes should ever be used.
  - **Dental diets** - Special dental diets such as Hills t/d easily ensures your pet receives good oral care every day. Hills t/d works like a tooth brush by gently scrubbing away bacteria laden plaque as they chew.
  - **Dental chews** - Dental chews, given regularly, have shown to reduce the build-up of plaque and tartar.
  - **Oravet chews** – Oravet dental hygiene chews are like a tooth brush in a chew. Daily use of Oravet will help scrub away plaque and form a protective barrier against the bacteria that leads to plaque and tartar build up.
  - **Maxiguard Oral Gel** - Through its unique combination of zinc and ascorbic acid (vitamin C) Maxiguard helps control gingivitis, plaque and halitosis. Zinc is antibacterial, reducing anaerobic bacteria responsible for bad breath and plaque formation. Vitamin C stimulates collagen production, aiding in gingival repair for treatment of periodontal pockets and gingival recession.
  - **Oral health check in 12 months**



### What is the basis for good oral hygiene for my pet?

- **DO:**
  - Take your pet to the vet for regular dental health check-ups and a scale and polish if recommended.
  - Get your pet used to daily teeth brushing from an early age
  - Use a toothbrush and toothpaste specially formulated for domestic pets
  - Reward your pet with a treat after brushing, such as giving a toy or taking it for a walk...
  - Maintain your pet's health by feeding a specially formulated dental kibble and dental supplements such as dental chews/bars.
  - Take your pet to have its teeth scaled and polished as soon as your vet recommends it the longer you leave it, the more quickly the disease can develop toward irreversible stages such as tooth loss.
- **DON'T:**
  - Think bad breath is normal
  - Let periodontal disease get any worse once it has been diagnosed.