



Veterinary Dentistry

A Significant Factor in Pet & Practice Health



C.E.T.
HOME DENTAL CARE

Pet Dental Basics



Periodontal Disease

Is the most commonly diagnosed condition in small animal medicine.¹

Is the **#1 pet health problem** in adult dogs.²



76%

of dogs more than **2 years of age** suffer from periodontal disease.¹



53%

of pet owners have never cleaned their dog's teeth.³



Halitosis

Is the top complaint of pet owners and prompts discussion of dental disease.⁴

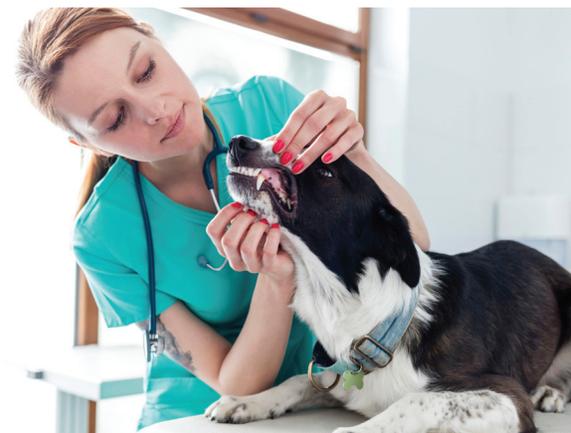
Progression of Periodontal Disease

| Condition | Day |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 |
| Plaque forms | █ (Day 1) |
| Calculus & tartar form | █ (Days 1-2) |
| Gingivitis* can begin | █ (Days 1-14) |

*Gingivitis is the initial, reversible state of inflammation of the gingiva (gum around tooth roots). Left untreated, gingivitis progresses to periodontitis, an advanced, serious, progressive destruction of the tissues and bony structures supporting the teeth.

Key Steps in expanding pet dental care

- 1 Appoint a dental advocate in the practice.** This is the best way to ensure that clients are properly educated about the need for preventive care.
- 2 Show clients vivid before and after photographs** of pets that have undergone professional dental cleaning.
- 3 Supply videos of dental procedures being performed** or create photo journals that can be sent to clients by email when they are making decisions about professional dental cleaning for their pet.



Dentistry should be an integral aspect of practice and a substantial source of practice revenue.

Good Dental Practice



What Clinicians Do ... and Shouldn't

- We tend to ignore the presence of dental disease because that is **how we have been trained**.
- We advocate prevention of heartworms and parasites but tell pet owners whose dog's teeth show some evidence of tartar to "wait until next year's exam" to treat it. **Why wait for dental disease to advance** instead of preventing it?
- We **check for dental disease** by physical examination of the conscious pet. The teeth may look healthy but still harbor disease. With the pet awake even board-certified veterinary dentists cannot diagnose periodontal disease in about half of their patients.



What Clinicians Don't Do ... and Should

- Often we forget to recognize that **small dogs are not big dogs**.
 - The first professional dental cleaning for a Labrador Retriever may be needed at age 4.
 - But the first professional dental cleaning for a Yorkshire Terrier may be needed at age 1.
- We may skim over the importance of good dental care because faculty at the university level includes fewer dentists now than were on staff in prior years, and **many new practitioners have not been mentored** by dentistry advocates.
- We neglect to schedule a follow-up exam after a professional dental cleaning. This **recheck is the opportunity** to show clients how to maintain their pet's teeth by brushing and using other at-home cleaning techniques and products.⁵
- We miss providing **directives for home dental care**. This omission makes a professional dental cleaning worthless. Without home care a dog's mouth is essentially infected 50 weeks a year.
- We may overlook the fact that periodontal disease is a severe infection with **impact on other organ systems** besides the mouth.
- We give verbal explanations but skip sending home a **dental education detail sheet** for the pet owner's review, as owners do not retain what you tell them in the clinic.

Dental Care & The Bottom Line

- 1 Gross revenue** from dental procedures is low in most veterinary practices.
- 2 Dental procedures** could easily account for at least 10% to 15% of total practice revenue.
- 3 Explain the reasons why** your professional dental cleaning costs more than less expensive dental treatments. Describe the need for and benefits of radiographs, blood work and pain medications that ensure the best possible health for their pet.



References

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Content herein is based on a dentistry roundtable discussion including Mary Berg, BS, RLATG,RVT, VTS (Dentistry); Brook Niemiec, DVM, DAVDC; Rick Marrinson, DVM; and Heather Prendergrast, RVT, CVPM, SPHR, and sponsored by Virbac.

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