



PETS HAVE TEETH TOO!

Dogs start out with 28 deciduous (baby) teeth, cats start out with 26 deciduous teeth. By 6 months of age, these baby teeth fall out and are replaced by permanent teeth, 42 in the dog and 30 in the cat. If the deciduous teeth have not all fallen out by 6 months of age, and the permanent teeth erupt under them, the deciduous teeth may need to be pulled under anesthesia (usually can be done at same time of spay or neuter). If they are not removed it may lead to problems, such as increased tartar formation, malocclusion problems, and gingival(gum) irritation.



How can I tell if my pet has dental problems?

BAD BREATH is often the first indicator of dental disease.

Cats more commonly may exhibit **INCREASED DROOLING**.

Other indications of dental disease that may be exhibited by both dogs and cats include:

- RELUCTANCE TO EAT OR PLAY WITH TOYS
- "CHATTERING" OF THE TEETH WHEN TRYING TO EAT
- LETHARGY
- BLEEDING GUMS
- ERODED TEETH
- FAILING TO GROOM (CATS)



When should dental care start with my pet?

The earlier the better. Help your puppy or kitten get used to having you open/look in its mouth and gradually train them to get used to having their teeth brushed. It is possible to train your older pet to get used to having its teeth brushed!



What will happen if I don't care for my pet's teeth on a regular basis?

Infected gums and teeth aren't just a problem in the mouth.

If left uncared for, dental disease can affect the heart, kidneys, intestinal tract, and joints, as well. The tartar and any infected areas of the mouth contain a multitude of bacteria that can spread to these other parts of the body via the blood stream. With regular dental care you can prevent some of these more severe side effects.

My pet needs a dental cleaning—what does that involve?

A pre-anesthetic exam with blood work would be recommended first to make sure your pet doesn't have any underlying problems before having the dental under anesthesia. The blood work will make sure that the liver, kidneys, and blood counts are within normal ranges and to reduce any possible risks prior to anesthesia. Many pets with bad teeth may be put on an antibiotic a few days prior to the dental to calm any infection and reduce possibility of complications. The dental itself is similar to a human dental cleaning—tartar removal, checking for cavities, gingival (gum) pockets, loose teeth, any growths on the gums or palate, removal of diseased teeth, and finally polishing. The polishing is to smooth the tooth after tartar removal, as the tartar pits the tooth. A smooth tooth will not encourage tartar formation as easily as a roughened tooth.

With good dental care, your pet can enjoy a long and healthy life.

