

DENTISTRY IN PETS

Q. What is periodontal disease?

- A. Periodontal disease is the most common cause of tooth loss. It involves the destruction of the gum tissue, ligaments, and bone, which support the teeth.

Q. What causes periodontal disease?

- A. The major cause of periodontal disease is a buildup of plaque, a mixture of saliva and bacteria, which adheres to the teeth and mineralizes to form tartar. Subsequent inflammation of the gum tissue and bleeding allows bacteria to enter the bloodstream. Tartar must then be removed with a dental scaler above and below the gums.

Q. How does periodontal disease affect my pet's health?

- A. Periodontal disease causes mouth odor, pain and eventual tooth loss. Much more serious consequences include infections resulting from bacteria entering the bloodstream. Many chronic diseases such as heart failure, kidney failure, respiratory problems and arthritis may originate from tooth decay.

Q. How do you clean my pet's teeth?

- A. Since animals will not generally sit still for the time and discomfort associated with a dental cleaning, anesthesia is required. An ultrasonic scaler, using water at very high speeds is used to remove the tartar and plaque from the teeth. Any teeth that cannot be saved due to infection, root exposure, or damage, are extracted. The teeth are then polished. A pain management injection is given if indicated. An antibiotic injection is always administered; oral antibiotics and/or pain relief medications may be dispensed for at home use as well.

Q. Are there risks associated with anesthesia?

- A. Before your pet is anesthetized, a thorough physical examination and any necessary lab work will be performed. If any health problems exist, we will discuss them with you prior to the procedure. At Indian Tree Animal Hospital, we use isoflurane, one of the safest inhalant gas anesthetic agents available. We also assess your pet's heart rate, ECG, breathing rate, oxygen delivery, and temperature the entire time it is under anesthesia with our state-of-the-art monitoring equipment and highly trained technical staff.

Q. What lab work is required to ensure the anesthetic safety of my pet?

- A. We recommend assessing your pet's liver and kidney function and blood counts at the minimum. Other tests that may be required include blood sugar levels, protein levels, electrolytes, and other organ function tests. We may also recommend or require that your animal be maintained on intravenous fluids during the procedure to maximize safety.

Q. What can I do to avoid recurrence of dental disease in my pet?

- A. Following the dental cleaning, prophylactic care at home using special animal toothpaste and a toothbrush will help maintain good oral hygiene. The use of special chews, treats, dental rinses, diets, and antibiotics may also help. Our medical staff can discuss these issues with you at discharge. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate speak with our staff.

Q. What is the cost of a dental procedure in my pet?

- A. The cost of a dental prophylaxis treatment may vary widely, depending upon the animal's size, age, and the condition of the teeth. A dental package includes general anesthesia, ultrasonic scaling and polishing of the teeth, recovery, an antibiotic injection, and a pain management injection as indicated. Costs will average from about \$140-220. Presurgical bloodwork runs from \$55-110. Intravenous fluid therapy is approximately \$50. Extractions may run from \$20-120, depending upon the number and difficulty. In conjunction with National Pet Dental Health Month, we offer our basic dentals at a 20% discount during the month of February.