

Teeth Trouble

Just like in people, dental care is an important part of maintaining your pets' health and wellbeing. Unlike in people, animals rarely have their teeth brushed on a daily basis. As a result dental disease is one of the most common diseases in pets affecting roughly 75% of dogs and 68% of cats. Plaque is the sticky fuzzy layer on teeth which naturally forms when bacteria mix with some foods. If not removed this can harden and form tartar. The gum margin where it attaches to the tooth can become red and inflamed, known as gingivitis. When gingivitis is left untreated, the entire attached gum can become inflamed, this is often painful and the breath will smell (halitosis). With ongoing neglect the gums can become extremely red, they often bleed easily and can start to be destroyed, seen as gum recession. By this stage some of the changes are likely irreversible. With advanced periodontitis/dental disease the teeth themselves can start to get destroyed, seen as bone resorption and in extremely severe cases bacteria can get into the blood stream causing septicaemia/blood poisoning resulting in a very sick pet.

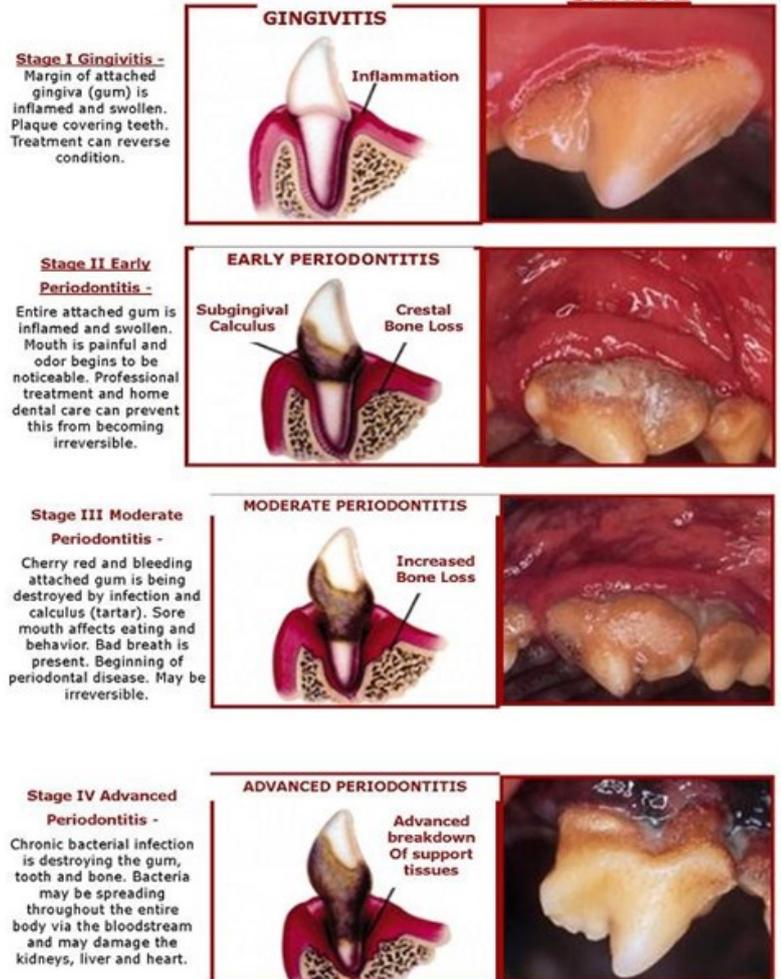
As we can see there is a cascade of the progression of dental disease, if possible it is best to stop it in its tracks early on, prior to some of the damage becoming irreversible. You can check your pets' teeth at home. Things to look for are; bad breath, yellowing of teeth particularly where the tooth meets the gum, red or puffy gums, drooling, reluctance to eat particularly hard food and pawing at the mouth. If you are concerned you can book your pet in with one of our veterinarians for a consult to assess it or we routinely do a dental exam as part of our health check and vaccination.

If your pet requires a dental they will need to undergo a general anaesthetic. Often but not always dental disease affects older animals so it is advisable before putting them under an anaesthetic we do a screening blood test to ensure we can mitigate any big risks associated. With early periodontal disease often only a scale and polish is required meaning we give all teeth a really good clean right up under the gum also. As periodontal disease progresses your pet is more likely to require a longer anaesthetic as teeth may need to be removed if the damage to the surrounding bone and gum is too severe.

If possible we encourage pet parents to attempt to brush their pets' teeth. This is often only feasible if started as a puppy or kitten. You can purchase pet specific toothpaste and brushes. Another option to promote oral health is a dental specific diet, this will help slow the build-up of tartar but usually will not remove tartar that has already formed. Dry food tends to be better due to the mechanical abrasion when the biscuit is crunched. There are dental chews available on the market, please talk with your vet for recommendations of which are worthwhile.

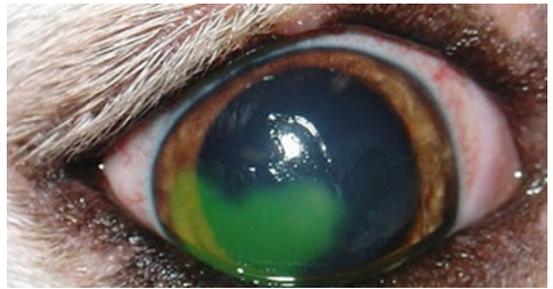
Four Stages of Periodontal Disease

CANINE



Eye don't know what to do.....

The cornea is the outer most surface of the eye, the transparent part covering the iris, pupil and front fluid filled chamber. Damage to the cornea can occur as a result of inadequate protection either due to eyelid dysfunction or tear deficiencies. Alternatively, the cells can be damaged by sudden trauma or material rubbing against it over a longer period (could be a foreign body, tumour or abnormal eyelashes). Other than herpes virus in cats, which is one of the components of the cat flu, infection alone doesn't usually cause ulceration.



A corneal ulcer often is quite painful so your animal may squint, often excess tears are produced, there is sometimes a more pussy discharge and the animal may shy away from light. The pupil when examined can be small, the cornea can appear cloudy and it often appears less uniform/smooth. At the vets if we suspect an ulcer we will apply a bright green/yellow dye to the eye which will stain the ulcerated area. However if the ulcer is very severe and deep sometimes staining won't be seen due to the cell layer the dye adheres to.

Normally the cornea starts healing within a few hours of injury and small defects are resolved over a period of 2-8 days. Deeper defects can take a lot longer to heal and there is often some scarring which is seen as loss of transparency. Treatment is aimed at ensuring the cause is removed and helping facilitate the natural healing. If there is evidence of infection, topical eye drops are often applied. If the pupil is small they may require another topical eye drop containing atropine, this is used to help make the pupil bigger stopping adhesions which can keep the pupil small and therefore damaging the eye long term. Depending on how sore your pet is they may also be dispensed oral pain relief.

If you have eye drops at home please do not use these unless advised by a vet for the eye condition affecting them at present not those left over from a historic case. This is because old eye drops that have previously been opened may have bacteria growing in them. Also some eye drops contain steroids, if an ulcer is present and you use these you can actually worsen the condition.

Sore Mouths in Rabbits

Rabbits have evolved so their teeth continue to grow throughout their life. This is a result of evolving to eat a high fibre diet as they are herbivores, this causes a lot of wear to their teeth. When owning a rabbit this information is critical as they can get really bad teeth issues if their diet isn't appropriate.

Dental issues in rabbits mainly involve the teeth growing in the wrong direction or abnormally long. Acquired dental issues relate to rabbits not fed a high fibre coarse diet so the teeth aren't worn down as intended. As a result the teeth grow too long which if left will get to a point where the rabbit is unable to chew properly. Congenital dental issues refer to those that result from birth defects or breed predispositions. Dwarf and lop eared breeds tend to be the most susceptible to congenital teeth troubles due to their shorter faces. Their teeth often become crowded and so may grow in abnormal directions.



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If your rabbit has teeth issues it may be a while before they are picked up. This is because rabbits are prey species and so hide any pain they are in due to not wanting to be the weakest link. The vet will often check your rabbit's teeth at annual vaccination enabling us to pick up issues early but you too can check the front teeth in your rabbit regularly. Treatment for sore teeth often involves tooth trimming and if severe possible extractions. Some rabbits with congenital issues may require ongoing dental care.

New Faces at Kennington ...

Recent additions include a new companion animal veterinarian, Lisa McIntosh along with Jenna Boulton in the office and Abbie Phillips and Danika Horton to our Vet Nursing team. They look forward to meeting you and your pets.



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