

What to Expect if Your Pet Needs Dental Care



Heritage Animal Hospital, LTD.

Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease begins when plaque, a mixture of bacteria and food debris, builds up on tooth surfaces and works its way under the gum line. Toxins released by the bacteria cause an inflammatory reaction that can lead to destruction of tissue and bone that keep the teeth in place. If the bacteria enter the blood stream, they can even affect the heart, liver, and kidneys. More than 80% of dogs have periodontal disease by the time they're four years old. It is the most frequently diagnosed health problem in pets.

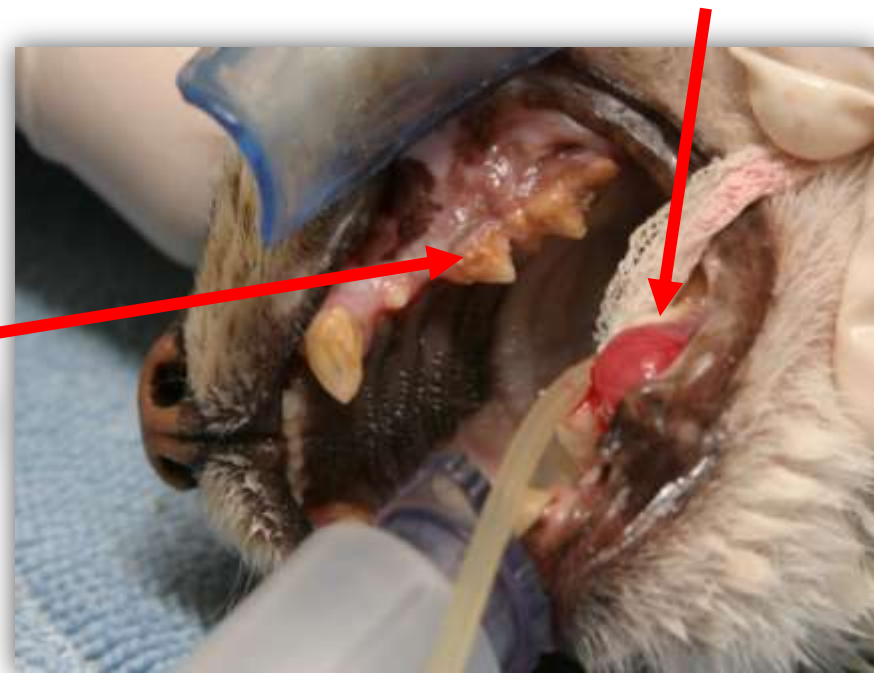
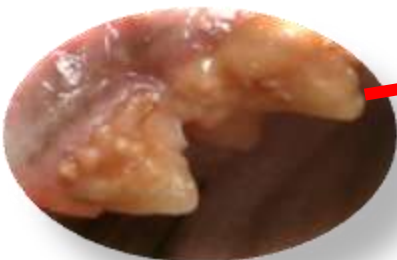


Signs of Periodontal Disease:

- Change in behavior
- Bad breath
- Abnormal drooling
- Bleeding gums
- Chipped or fractured teeth
- Yellow-brown crust on teeth
- Change of chewing or eating habits
- Tooth loss

Oral Mass

Heavy Tarter Accumulation



Examine your pet's mouth at least monthly. If you notice any problems, a veterinarian can perform a visual exam of your pet's face, mouth, and each tooth. Frequently, a pet's mouth will have several different problems that need care.



**Mild Tarter
Accumulation**

Precautions Taken Before Dental Procedures

Anesthesia is necessary to allow a thorough mouth exam and dental cleaning. Each tooth can then be examined individually and the type of treatment needed can then be determined. To ensure your pet's safety and best possible outcome while undergoing anesthesia at Heritage Animal Hospital, these precautions are taken:

1. Every patient receives a complete physical exam before a dental procedure to insure the animal is healthy enough to undergo anesthesia.
2. Pre-surgical blood work is recommended to every patient to help us evaluate your pet's general health condition, and checks your pet's kidney, liver and pancreatic functions.

We have in-house blood chemistry analyzers that allow us to perform quick and accurate blood tests. These results also give us a baseline for future blood tests.



3. Intravenous catheters are used for all dental and surgical procedures. This allows the patient to receive intravenous fluids during the procedure to keep your pet hydrated and to help maintain your pet's blood pressure. The fluids are administered with the use of an intravenous pump. The I.V. sedation is given through the catheter. The catheter also allows emergency access to the vein.



4. Your pet is kept warm with a circulating hot water blanket to prevent hypothermia.

Dental Procedures

1. Your pet's sedation and anesthesia is determined individually. Your pet will receive a sedative, and pain medication if indicated before the procedure begins. This decreases your pet's anxiety and helps the anesthesia go smoother. After your pet's i.v. catheter is placed, a short-acting i.v. anesthetic is administered. This allows the pet to be relaxed long enough to place an endotracheal tube in their airway. Once a small cuff is inflated on the tube, your animal's airway is sealed from the water and debris that are caused by the dental cleaning. Your pet is then maintained on a gas anesthetic called "Isoflourane".



2. During the procedure, your pet is being monitored by a certified veterinary technician. A respiratory monitor and Pulseoximeter are some tools that aid us in our anesthetic monitoring. An injectable antibiotic is also given to help safeguard your pet's health.

3. Now that your pet is sleeping comfortably, the mouth can be examined for problem areas. Each tooth is probed with a periodontal probe that measures the depth of the gum area surrounding the tooth. These measurements are an important part of determining the degree or stage of periodontal disease your pet may have. This will help us determine if a tooth may require further examination with an x-ray. While looking at the mouth, we are also looking for missing, broken, loose, or chipped teeth. We are checking the gums for signs of problems and the mouth for any oral masses. All observations are charted for future reference.



4. Now a certified veterinary technician cleans all the surfaces of the teeth using an ultrasonic scaler and hand instruments. No more icky stuff! After the cleaning, the teeth are polished with a low speed polishing angle to help buff the surface smooth.

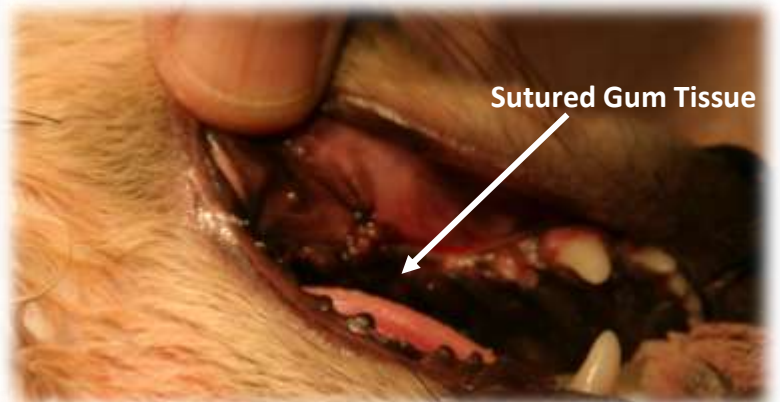
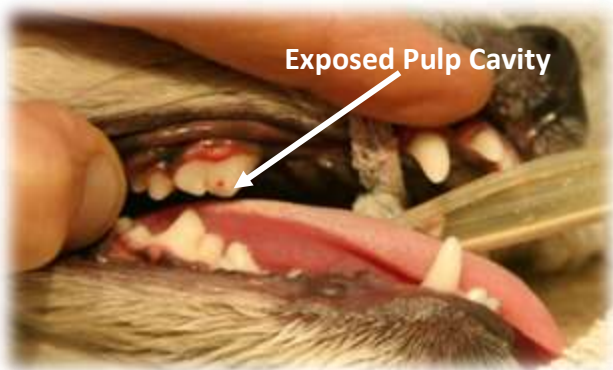


5. If X-rays are needed, we have state of the art digital X-ray equipment that can show us what is happening inside the tooth and the root below the gum line. This helps us determine if a tooth can be saved or if it should be extracted.



6. If an extraction is needed, a nerve block is placed in the area it is needed. This will decrease the pain and the amount of gas anesthetic needed and will also help your pet to be more comfortable upon awakening. Your pet's dental procedure is done in the morning of the day that it is scheduled and should be able to go home later that afternoon. He may be a bit sleepy when he gets home and precaution should be taken around stairs. If an extraction was done, you will have instructions to feed soft food for awhile. All dog dentals are sent home with an oral antibiotic, we've stirred up a lot of bacteria! Cats are given a long lasting antibiotic injection. Pain meds will go home with those that need it.

This patient had a very common fracture of the upper 4th premolar. The fracture was visible upon examination. When the calculus was removed from the tooth, a red "dot" was visible on the surface of the tooth. This was a sign that the pulp cavity was exposed. After x raying the tooth, it was determined that the tooth should be extracted. After the tooth was surgically removed, the gum area was sutured to help the mouth heal.



Before and After Pictures

Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Ongoing Dental Care

After your pet's mouth is healed you should begin a dental care program with your pet. The gold standard in dental care for your pet is daily tooth brushing. This can also be supplemented with other oral care products such as oral rinses, gels, water additives and chews and foods that are proven to decrease plaque and tarter build up. Let us show you how to brush your pet's teeth. If that isn't possible for you to do with your pet, our veterinary team can help you choose what may work for you. It is never too early or too late to start dental care for your pet.



Puppies can get accustomed early to tooth brushing. This will help you reduce the frequency and involvement of future dental cleanings and help your pet's overall health and comfort. To learn more about brushing your pet's teeth, a handout is available that outlines the steps involved.

OraVet is a sealant that can be applied as the last step in your pet's dental cleaning. This creates an invisible barrier that prevents plaque and tarter build up. A take home kit allows you to apply the sealant to the gum line once weekly to replenish the barrier. The gel is effective with or without brushing and takes less than 60 seconds to apply.



Periodontal disease can be prevented in most pets through professional and daily home care. Start a preventive program of veterinarian supervised dental care today – ask us how we can help.

