

DENTAL CARE FOR YOUR PET

Dental health care is something that nearly every good pet owner will be involved with. This is because progressive dental disease (yes, disease) occurs in most pets as they age. The time to take action is before there are irreversible changes like periodontal disease or decay. This is when we call the cleaning prophylactic. It will cost you less for a “simple cleaning” sooner than for extractions and treatment of infections later and the result is preferable. Short duration light general anesthesia is required for a proper job to be done. It is safe and should not be used as an excuse to deny your pet reasonable and beneficial care. Most veterinarians today will require a pre-anesthetic blood panel to screen for any potential issues which should be addressed first. If your little friend hasn’t had a blood test before, this will serve as a good baseline for future comparison. If there is previous blood work, the pre-dental update can serve to update your pet’s medical record. It is important to note trends and this is possible only if the same values are tracked periodically. Good anesthetic protocol also involves monitoring by a trained nurse anesthetist using vital signs and sophisticated monitoring equipment. Many times other procedures which require anesthesia can be done at the same time such as growth removal or hip x-rays and of course nail trims.

The value of home dental care for your pet is dependant upon the owner’s willingness, ability, and dedication. I say “the best home dental care you can provide for your pet is what you actually will do every day”. So for one owner who actually brushes the pet’s teeth every day, that’s great, but if that’s not going to happen maybe a barrier-sealant product that is smoothed on the teeth and gums once a week would be better. If that’s not going to happen, perhaps a tartar control food (Hill’s Prescription Diet T/D) or an antibacterial water additive (Breathalyzer) would be useful. Note that a dry food generally crumbles when chewed if it even gets chewed, so don’t think that food out of a bag is likely to keep the teeth and gums healthy. The fact is that like with us, even the most meticulous home pet dental care may slow but not prevent the progression of dental disease and a professional cleaning is needed on a regular basis to maintain really good dental health. And just as in people, dental infection may get into the blood and cause damage to the internal organs over time.