

Your Pet's Dental Procedure

- By the age of 2, 75% of animals have some form of periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is infection of the gum and bone that surrounds and supports the tooth. Early on, periodontal disease will manifest as gingivitis (inflammation and bleeding of the gum tissue). As periodontal disease progresses, the gum pulls away from the tooth and the underlying bone may be lost. In the end stage, the tooth may loosen or fall out.



Gingivitis

- By pursuing a dental prophylactic cleaning for your pet, you have made a conscious decision to give your pet a healthier and more comfortable life.

The Pre-operative Exam

At this visit, a full awake oral exam and pre-operative labwork will be performed. Not all pets are fully cooperative for this exam, so we will do the best we can to look in your pet's mouth. Because 50-75% of the tooth structure is below the gumline, it is impossible to fully predict what we will find once your pet is anesthetized. In some cases, the teeth are so covered in tartar, that even with a cooperative patient, we can't always know what lies beneath.

In this patient, it would be impossible to know what lies under the tartar on this big chewing premolar. Once the tooth is cleaned under anesthesia, the tooth will be re-evaluated, probed, and x-rayed if necessary.



The Dental Procedure

All dental procedures are performed under general anesthesia. This allows for scaling above and below the gumline and polishing of the tooth. After the teeth are cleaned, a full oral exam and dental charting will be performed. Any problematic teeth will be x-rayed. X-rays allow us to visualize the 50-75% of the tooth that is below the gumline. Without x-ray, it is impossible to know how severely affected a tooth is.



This x-ray shows a tooth root abscess (the blacker circular area at the tip of the root) to the large first molar in the lower jaw of a dog. Without x-ray, it would be impossible to know that there was a painful infected root to this tooth.

Once x-rays are completed, a decision will be made to either proceed with treatment of the affected teeth or to wake up your pet and have the treatment scheduled at a future date. Because we can not always predict which or how many teeth may need treatment or extraction, it is not always possible to complete all treatments in one procedure. Furthermore, dental procedures can be very lengthy so, for the safety of your pet, we may elect to break up the anesthesia time into two or more separate procedures.

It is very important that you be available by phone the morning of your pet's procedure. We may need to contact you to revise our treatment plan or to discuss how to proceed with a problematic tooth. We may need your consent to extract or seal a tooth, we may discuss antibiotic treatments, or we may discuss referral to a board certified veterinary dentist if things are beyond the scope of what a general practitioner should perform.