



## DENTAL DISEASE - CATS

### *How common is dental disease in cats?*

Dental disease is one of the most frequent ailments seen by Veterinary Surgeons, and can be found to some degree in the majority of cats over two years of age. The most common problems are due to periodontal disease, gingivitis and neck lesions (also called resorptive lesions).

### *What are the signs of dental disease?*

- Bad breath
- No interest in food/reluctance to eat
- Chewing with obvious caution or discomfort
- Dropping food from the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing
- Dribbling
- Pawing at mouth
- Shaking head
- Weight loss (from inappetance)
- Inability to groom



Any of these signs could be indicative of dental disease and require Veterinary attention.

### *What usually causes dental disease?*

The most common cause of dental disease in cats is due to tartar accumulation. As in humans, cats accumulate bacterial plaque on the surface of their teeth which if not removed quickly becomes mineralized to form tartar (also called calculus). The bacterial products and food stuck to the tartar are one potential cause of bad breath.

The accumulation of tartar and bacteria on the teeth surfaces will eventually lead to infection and gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). If the disease is caught at an early stage then thorough professional veterinary treatment may permit a full recovery. However, if gingivitis is allowed to persist untreated, then irreversible periodontal disease will occur. During this process the bones and ligaments that support the teeth are destroyed leading to excessive tooth mobility and eventually tooth loss. Infection around the socket causes the formation of pus and a foul odour which may spread deeper into the tooth socket creating an abscess or more severe problems.

### *What are tooth neck lesions?*

Neck lesions result from a progressive destruction of the tooth substance effectively resulting in slowly deepening holes in the teeth concerned. Once the sensitive part of the tooth is exposed these lesions are extremely painful, and usually the only available treatment is to extract the tooth. The cause of the disease is unknown, however poor oral hygiene is expected to play a role in the disease process

## *What should I do if my cat has signs of dental problems?*

If your cat is showing any signs of mouth pain or you can see that your cat has signs of tartar accumulation or gingivitis then you should seek Veterinary advice as soon as possible. You will be advised of the most appropriate course of treatment which may involve having your cats teeth examined and cleaned under general anaesthesia, with the possibility of tooth extractions.



## *What can I do to prevent dental disease in my cat?*

In order to prevent dental disease the prime aim is to keep the mouth as hygienic as possible and to reduce the rate at which tartar builds up on the teeth. You can help do this by:

- **Brushing** – this is the most effective way of reducing plaque and tartar. A number of toothpastes and brushes are available from your Vet for use in animals. You only need to brush the outside of your cats teeth and with gentleness, patience and perseverance it is possible to regularly clean some cats teeth in this way.
- **Providing a diet** which encourages chewing such as a dry biscuit diet. The act of chewing stimulates the production of saliva, which contains natural antibacterial substances and the mechanical action helps stop the plaque and tartar building up on the teeth. Any dry diet will help the teeth to some degree but there are specific diets now on the market designed especially for this purpose. For example: Hill Feline T/D diet. (a prescription dental diet available from your vets).
- **Aquadent** – an antibacterial solution which is placed in your cats water and replaced daily. This helps to reduce bacterial growth and the chemical contained called ‘Xylitol’ interferes with plaque adhesion.
- **Plaque off** – a natural powder which is placed in your cat’s food. This product helps to counteract plaque on the surface of the teeth whilst helping to dissolve tartar.
- **Logic oral hygiene Gel** – contains a multi – enzyme product that helps destroy existing plaque and prevent the formation of new plaque.

For any advice on dental care for your cat please ask your Vet or a Veterinary Nurse.



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