



Tip Of The Tail

Dental Disease And Prevention

As veterinarians, pet owners ask us lots of questions. One question that every pet lover wants to know is, "What is the most common disease that you see in pets?" The answer may surprise you. But more importantly, we hope you are also asking, "How can I prevent the most common disease in pets?"

According to recent studies, up to 85 percent of dogs and cats have dental or periodontal disease. Periodontal disease in our pets occurs much as it does in people. Bacteria

accumulate on the teeth to form a sticky film called plaque. This infection spreads down the tooth and even below the gums. Gum tissues react to the infection, causing inflammation called gingivitis. Symptoms of gingivitis include red, swollen and sometimes bleeding gums. Over time, the plaque mineralizes and hardens to form tartar.

Under the protection of the tartar, more destructive types of bacteria establish infection that lead to destruction of the tissues that support and nourish the teeth. Consequently, prolonged periodontal disease results in bad breath, bleeding gums, pain, infection, bone destruction and tooth loss.

Periodontal disease is not just about cosmetics or bad breath. Some studies suggest that dental infections can result

in serious infections in the heart, kidneys and liver. Also, pain from dental disease can lead to symptoms like aggression, depression, lethargy and other behavioral problems.

Therefore, the most common disease we see in pets is also one we should actively try to prevent! Pet owners can learn proper techniques to help keep teeth clean and prevent disease. Most pets can be trained to tolerate these treatments and many actually enjoy the experience.

The foundation of home dental care is teeth brushing. Specially designed pet toothbrushes are available to effectively reach the special anatomy of our furry friends' mouths. Pet toothpastes are designed to be safely swallowed and are flavored to be appealing to pets. (Do not use human toothpaste.) Other preventative tools include dental treats, special chew toys and oral rinses. Every pet is different and will have different needs, so consult with your veterinarian before beginning a home dental care regimen.

In many cases, however, prevention may be too late and professional intervention will be necessary to treat the disease that is present. A veterinarian should examine your pet every year to assess general health and dental health so that disease can be identified early and treated appropriately. A proactive approach is certainly better than waiting until there is pain, infection and/or tooth loss.

Even with diligent dental home care, most pets will require a professional dental cleaning multiple times in their lifetime to remove tartar that has accumulated. While this process involves brief anesthesia, dental cleanings done in this way are safe and assure a thorough examination and cleaning of every tooth above and below the gums.

At the Palm City Animal Clinic, we are dedicated to treating illnesses in our special patients. More importantly, though, we strive to prevent disease before it becomes a problem for our clients and their pets. This is why we have devoted the months of September and October to preventing dental disease by offering special discounts on dental cleanings and screening blood work. Dental disease, though common, is usually preventable and we hope we can help you prevent it in your pets.

Established in 1981, Palm City Animal Clinic is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your pets. With focuses on compassionate care in surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, preventative medicine, extensive diagnostics and emergency service, Palm City Animal Clinic combines exceptional medical care with a caring philosophy for pets and their owners. For more information, call (772) 283-0920, visit www.palmcityanimalclinic.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmCityAnimalClinic.

