

## Dental Care for your Pet's Health

We know you love your pets and want to do everything possible to keep them healthy and happy. One of the most overlooked areas of pet care is dental care. ***Animals suffer from the same pain and complications as people when their teeth get bad.*** Because dogs and cats do not display evidence of pain and discomfort as easily as people, problems can commonly be overlooked. They cannot tell us when they are hurting and will only display obvious symptoms once their condition gets serious.

Dental disease not only can cause *severe pain and inability to eat*, when left untreated the bacteria and infection in the mouth can *enter the bloodstream effecting the kidneys, heart, and liver- causing micro-abscesses*. A pet's overall health condition, as well as quality of life, can be improved with a healthy mouth.

A common myth is that pets do not need dental care since "in the wild" they had no such option and "did fine". The truth is the average life span of animals in the wild is so short, there is no time for the teeth to age and develop problems. An even sadder truth is that if they did live long enough, bad teeth would eventually kill them due to infection and inability to eat. Also pets eat a very different diet than they used even 20 years ago. They have gone from being fed strictly pet food or meat to getting regular human table scraps and fancy pet treats. These additions to their diet have introduced sugars and preservatives, which produce plaque just like in people.

### **Preventative Care**

All pets should be given some form of dental preventative care. We do not want them coming in for major dental work any more than you do- we'd rather see them happy and healthy.

There are several options available to owners who wish to give their pet the best care possible. Preventative care can keep your pet healthy and save you unnecessary expense, in the same way that preventative care for yourself and your family makes your dental visits easier and less expensive. Our staff will be happy to discuss your options with you and a summary of our recommendations for dental care can be found on the reverse of this sheet. All forms of care help to maintain a healthy mouth for your pet.

### **When problems arise**

An examination of the mouth is usually performed at the time of your pet's annual physical. Please keep in mind that if your pet is uncooperative, our ability to examine their mouth without anesthesia may be extremely limited. If the doctor determines there is a problem that needs correction, he will make the necessary recommendations and give you a written estimate. The estimate is good for 14 days, after which time costs will likely increase as dental conditions continue to grow more severe when left untreated. For most dental treatments, your pet will spend the day with us. They will be given a general anesthetic and sleep through the entire procedure. Most often, they can go home the same evening. For major dental treatments, the doctor will often recommend a complimentary follow up exam 2-3 weeks after the procedure is performed.

### **Procrastination in Treatment**

Imagine living with a painful tooth for months while waiting to make an appointment. We would never dream of waiting for ourselves or our children, but even people who consider their pets part of their family will often make the mistake of waiting on dental work their veterinarian has recommended. Often the wait is due to scheduling or finances, but just like with human dental care the problem never goes away by itself- it only gets more severe and more expensive. Please assist us in providing your pet good medical care by following the doctor's recommendations in a timely manner.