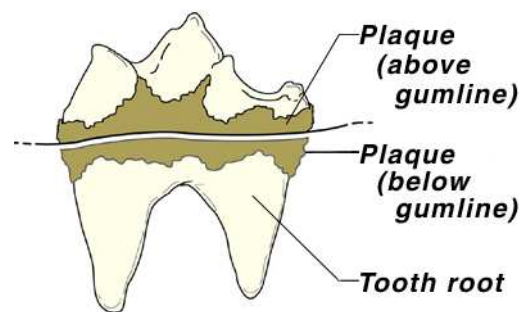


Dental disease is the most common disease in dogs and cats. Over 68% of all pets over the age of three have some form of periodontal or dental disease. Most pets will show subtle signs of dental disease. It is up to the pet's family and veterinarian to uncover this hidden and often painful condition.

There are a number of signs that should alert you to dental disease or other mouth problems in your pet. Your pet may show a decreased interest in food or approach the food bowl and then show a reluctance to eat. It may chew with obvious caution and discomfort, drop food from the mouth, or may swallow with difficulty. Dribbling may be seen, possibly with blood, and there may be a marked unpleasant odor to the breath. In some cases the pets may be seen pawing at their mouths or shaking their heads. A reluctance to eat may lead to weight loss, which can become quite marked. Many pets will refuse dry food and demonstrate a preference for moist or canned foods. Dental disease and oral pain may account for the "finicky appetites" that some pets display.

The most common dental problems seen in pets are caused by periodontal disease, a term used to describe inflammation or infection of the tissues surrounding the tooth. Accumulation of tartar and calculus on the teeth contributes to gum recession around the base of the tooth. Infection soon follows and the gums recede, exposing sensitive unprotected tooth surfaces. Untreated infection then spreads into the tooth socket and ultimately the tooth loosens and is lost.



***Molar tooth with dental plaque***

Natural bacteria in the pet's mouth causes plaque to build on the teeth. If the plaque is not removed from the tooth surface, the plaque thickens, becomes mineralized and is then visible as tartar and ultimately calculus. Once tartar has formed it will be necessary to remove it by professional scaling and polishing under anesthesia.

The goal of dental scaling and polishing is to remove the tartar and invisible plaque. Tooth scaling will be performed using both hand scalers and ultrasonic cleaning equipment to remove tartar both above and below the gum line. The tartar beneath the gum line causes the most significant gum recession. The teeth are then polished in order to help prevent subsequent plaque build-up. It may be necessary to carry out other procedures such as extractions at the same time.

If your pet is displaying any symptoms mentioned above or you have any other questions regarding dental procedures, please call us today.