

Dental Disease in Cats

Did you know that up to 85% of cats over 4 years of age have dental disease? This is a shocking proportion and if left untreated can cause gum inflammation, pain and the potential for tooth root abscesses and tooth loss. At Lanes Vets we encourage dental home care and offer support to owners when learning how to care for their pets' teeth.

How can Dental Disease be prevented?

We advise owners to consider preventative care to stop dental disease developing.

Cleaning your cat's teeth with a toothbrush and cat toothpaste is the perfect way to look after them. Ideally this would be done every day but even just twice a week can make a huge difference. Our team of Veterinary Nurses can show you how to do this and help you with tips on how to teach your cat that it is a good experience.

Dental treats can be helpful to clean a cat's teeth but it should be kept in mind that dental treats have a calorie content and your pet's main meal will need to be smaller to compensate. There are also dry food diets that are formulated with special fibres to clean a cat's teeth as they chew. These can be fed as a complete food so that your pet's teeth are 'brushed' every time they have a meal.

There are other products available which can be added to drinking water or used to flush the mouth. They are not as effective as brushing but can be helpful in a reluctant or uncooperative pet.

Progression of Dental Disease

Plaque is a normal biofilm that develops on teeth each day; it is made up of bacteria and some of the sugars from the breakdown of food. With time a build up of plaque may occur on the teeth if they are not cleaned, this looks like a yellowy deposit usually worst up near the gum line. If left then this plaque can become mineralised and form tartar, which is harder to remove and looks like a brown deposit on the teeth. Plaque and tartar both contain bacteria, which will cause smelly breath, gum inflammation (gingivitis) and can lead to periodontal disease where inflammation and infection occurs around the roots and can lead to tooth loss. These conditions are often painful and although a cat will probably continue eating and acting normally you may see signs of salivation/drooling, face rubbing, licking, chewing on one side, dropping food and spots of blood when chewing.

Once tartar has started to build up and gingivitis occurs it often means that the teeth need to be descaled. This is done under anaesthetic and involves scaling off all the tartar and then polishing the teeth to give a smooth surface so that plaque doesn't build up again too quickly afterwards and preventative dental care can be started at home to keep the plaque under control. Having this done early enough can prevent pain and tooth loss.

Many owners worry about having their animal under anaesthetic, but the risks in a healthy animal are very low. The risks from leaving dental disease are much higher. Once the gums become inflamed it is possible for bacteria to get into the cat's blood stream and cause damage to other organs such as the heart, kidneys and liver, early intervention is much safer for your pet.

Remember that prevention of and early treatment of dental disease is much better for your cat than major dental work and tooth extractions when they get older. At Lanes Vets we want to keep your pet healthy and happy.

Lanes Vets Locations & Contact Information.

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