



More than Just Bad Breath



We often first recognize that something may be changing with our pet's oral health when we notice a foul odor coming from their mouth. In fact, there could be a lot more happening than just bad breath and that odor could indicate serious health and dental concerns. Dental disease is one of the most common medical conditions seen by veterinarians and one of the most preventable. Bad breath alone is not the only indication of dental disease, and many pets will never show obvious signs until extensive treatment is needed. Annual wellness exams can help your pet's veterinarian identify signs of dental disease early on and in turn improve their overall quality of life. In order to achieve optimal dental health, veterinarians recommend a multimodal approach, combining at home dental care with routine dental cleanings and examinations.

Dogs and cats can suffer from many of the same dental and oral conditions as humans do. Instead of a cavity, most dogs and cats commonly fall victim to periodontal conditions. Periodontal disease describes inflammation of the structures surrounding the tooth, like the gum tissue, the tooth roots, ligaments, and bone. When these structures are affected, they affect the overall environment of the tooth and increase the risk of tooth decay over time. As periodontal diseases progresses, it can affect your pet's ability to eat, cause pain, and lead to tooth loss.

Routine dental cleanings performed by your veterinarian can help slow the progression of periodontal disease. Dental procedures for our pets are performed under general anesthesia to allow for thorough examination, medical charting, scaling, and polishing. The dental exam will include measuring gingival pocket depths as well as noting any abnormalities with the tooth and surrounding gum surface. A veterinary technician will scale the soft plaque and hardened calculus from the surface of your pet's teeth as well as apply polish to smooth imperfections on the tooth's surface. Radiographs of the mouth are often taken to determine a tooth's health beneath the surface and can help guide your veterinarian on whether tooth removal is recommended.

Preventive dental care is also vital for optimal oral health. Home dental care is recommended for all pets, not just those suffering from periodontal disease. Just like with us, brushing is best and should always be performed with tooth paste and brushes designed specifically for animals. For pets that do not tolerate brushing, there are dental wipes and treats formulated to help prevent tartar build up and freshen breath. Always be sure to talk to your veterinarian about which options are best for you and your pet!