

ORAL HEALTH at Center City Veterinary Hospital

WHY ARE DENTAL EVALUATIONS IMPORTANT TO MY PET'S HEALTH?

Dental health is of primary importance to the overall health of your pet. Dental infection can travel through the blood stream and lead to organ damage, including the heart, liver and kidneys. What is more frightening is that it has been reported that over 60% of dogs and cats have some oral pathology, gingivitis or dental disease. At Center City Veterinary Hospital, we believe the first step to ensuring oral health is preventative care. Routine cleaning BEFORE there is dental disease will provide the best value for you and your pet. During your pet's yearly physical exam, teeth will be assessed for tartar/calculus, gum redness, oral sensitivity, bleeding when teeth are brushed, and halitosis (bad breath).

DENTAL EXAM AND PROCEDURE

Before initiating a complete dental exam, we perform a complete physical exam, including the teeth and recommend pre-operative blood work in order to evaluate and anticipate potential concerns. In young pets, a small blood panel can be done to make sure that the organs that are most vital are healthy enough for anesthesia and which drugs we can use to minimize risk for your pet. Older pets might warrant a blood panel that checks additional parameters, such as a thyroid level. Once the blood work results are in, you can make an appointment for your pet to come in for their dental procedure.

When treating your pet, we not only complete a thorough exam, but take extra measures to ensure your pet's comfort and safety. Before, during, and after the exam we utilize the most modern technologies so that your pet receives optimal care. By completing each of the details below, we decrease the possibility of anesthetic complications, which can lead to death.

1. Before we begin, CCVH makes sure that your animal will be comfortable. Under anesthesia, animals quickly get cold, so we use warm water blankets and forced hot air blankets so that your pet's body temperature is well controlled. Keeping pets warm also helps them recover from anesthesia faster.
2. The first step in the procedure involves sedation and anesthesia. Your pet will receive pre-operative medications to sedate them and an IV catheter for intravenous fluids, which will help keep their blood pressure stable. Your pet also is given a combination of injectable medications to make them very sleepy.
3. Once your pet is very sedate, a tube is then inserted into the airway to administer oxygen. This oxygen a) helps your pet breathe b) has a human-grade gas anesthetic that keeps them asleep during the procedure c) keeps any fluids or infectious debris that are removed from the teeth from going into the airway.
4. CCVH is unique in that after your pet is under anesthesia, we utilize the most modern technology so that we can monitor their EKG (electrical activity of the heart), pulse oximetry (oxygenation of the blood), blood pressure, CO2 production, and body temperature.
5. After your pet is successfully anesthetized, we flush the mouth with an antibacterial rinse.

Large pieces of plaque and tartar are removed to allow proper assessment of the teeth. We check the space in between the gum and the tooth (called the periodontal pocket). We check the top of the tooth (the crown) for wear, fractures or discoloration and each of these parameters are recorded on a dental chart.

6. X-rays are taken of the ENTIRE mouth: 60% of the tooth lies below the gum line and we have seen MANY cases where animals appear to have normal, healthy teeth above the gum line, but very serious and painful disease lies beneath the gums.
7. After we have our oral health assessment complete, we can formulate a complete treatment plan. In nearly all cases, the doctor will call you to discuss the recommended plan. The teeth are then scaled above and below the gum line to remove mineralized deposits (calculus and tartar).
8. With the dental procedure completed, your pet is awoken from anesthesia and their vital parameters monitored closely until they are fully conscious. Your pet will be kept at CCVH for several hours in order to receive additional IV fluids, which speed recovery. If your pet experiences discomfort, pain medication is given.

ORAL SURGERY

All oral surgery at CCVH is done by a veterinarian. Many owners have never been informed about recommended maintenance for their pets' teeth. Consequently, many dogs and cats will require some degree of oral surgery. Most often, this entails extraction of the affected teeth. We use numbing local anesthetics (just like human dentists) to reduce discomfort before and after the procedure. By using local anesthetics we can also reduce their intake of anesthetic gasses and the risks associated with anesthesia. Teeth are extracted using high speed dental instruments and any open "sockets" are surgically closed by relocating the attached gingiva. This procedure helps eliminate disease and speeds healing. All remaining teeth are then thoroughly polished since a smooth enamel surface will be less hospitable to bacteria growing and causing future dental disease. Fluoride foam is applied to strengthen the teeth.

HOME CARE

Your pet will leave with some form of home care so that you can help keep their teeth looking good at home. Without home care, most dogs will require a dental cleaning about every 12 months, and some dogs will get buildup even a few months after cleaning if nothing is done at home.

Note: If your pet requires (or you would like) root canal therapy, dental prosthetics (caps), orthodontics, or if your pet has or is in danger of fractures to the jaw, we have several board certified veterinary dentists that we usually refer to with these types of cases. You can find out more about veterinary dentistry and board certified veterinary dentistry at www.AVDC.org.

If you have any questions about your pets specific dental needs, please feel free to contact CCVH at 215-923-2284 or info@centerictyvet.com