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## **What does Dental Disease mean for your pet?**

Dental disease is an extremely common problem in dogs and cats. It can vary from mildly dirty teeth right through to full-blown infection, decay and pain. The good news is pets don't have to put up with affected teeth and there are simple, effective methods to help prevent dental disease from occurring in the first place.

### ***Why do pets get dental disease?***

Naturally-occurring bacteria in the mouth of pets can combine with microscopic food particles to form an invisible coating on their teeth called **plaque**. This then attracts deposits of a thick, chalky, calcified layer called **tartar**. This layer then attracts even more bacteria which can eventually lead to infection and inflammation of the gums; **gingivitis**. This is a process that occurs in all pets but is made worse by feeding soft foods that stick to the side of teeth, like fresh, rolled or tinned food.

### ***How can I tell if my pet has dental disease?***

A quick look at your pets teeth (especially the back ones) will give you an indication as to the possibility of dental disease. Problems should be suspected if they have;

- Chalky build-up on teeth surfaces
- Red, inflamed gumlines
- Bad breath
- Pain on chewing hard foods
- Visibly loose teeth or discharges from the mouth

### ***Does a bit of dental disease really matter?***

Even the early stages of plaque, tartar and gingivitis can be painful for our pets. If these problems develop into decay, infection and abscessation then there is a significant level of pain involved. There is also a concern that low-grade, long-term bacterial shedding from a chronically affected mouth may affect the health of other organs like the eyes, kidneys and heart valves in pets with dental disease

### ***What can be done about dental disease?***

If your pet already has evidence of dental disease then they may need an ultra-sonic scale and polish of their teeth to rid them of the plaque and tartar. The existence of decay, loose teeth or infection may indicate the need for some teeth to be extracted. Some patients will also be prescribed antibiotics and pain-killers, depending on the level of their dental disease.

Once the teeth are cleaned and polished (or if your pet is lucky enough to already have clean teeth) then prevention is the key. Daily brushing with a dedicated pet toothpaste is ideal, dental diets like Hills™ Prescription Diet t/d can also be a huge benefit and dental toys or treats may also help.

***Dental disease is an extremely common problem in pets and we can help!***

***"Caring for the pets of Ipswich since 1967"***

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