

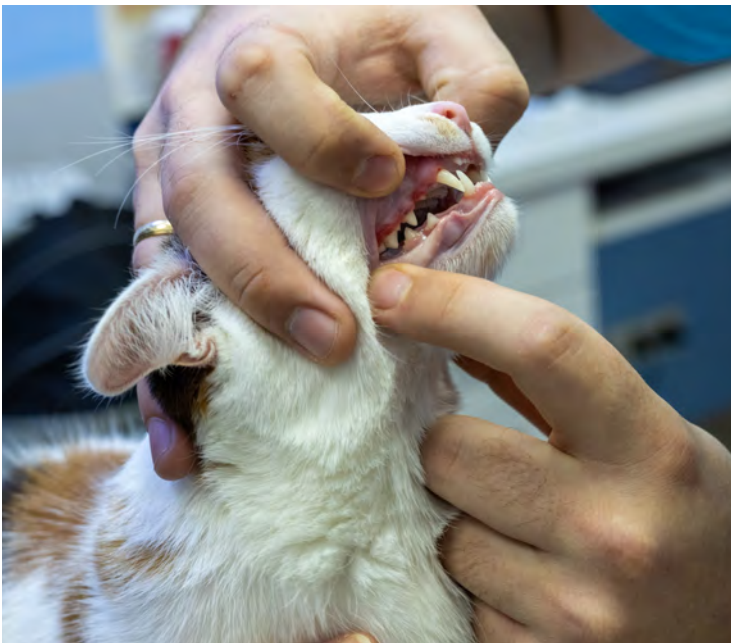
## Dental Disease in pets

Dental problems are one of the common conditions we see in veterinary practice about 80-85 % of dogs and cats will show some signs of dental disease by the age of 3 years and often our pets will show no signs of having problems despite being uncomfortable.



There are several factors that may make pets more susceptible to dental problems:

- Age - we see dental disease more commonly in older pets due to general wear and tear
- Breed - brachycephalic (short nosed breeds) for example Pugs and Persians are possibly more prone to problems as their teeth are crowded together due to their facial conformation causing tartar to build up
- Diet - wet food has no abrasive action when chewing so does not help to remove the plaque
- Retained teeth - cause problems due to over crowding
- Underlying diseases - FIV / FeLV or calicivirus infection can be associated with dental problems in cats



### What are the signs of Dental Disease

- Bad breath
- Pain or difficulty eating
- Weight loss
- Plaque and tartar
- Red / inflamed / bleeding gums
- Wobbly / missing / broken teeth
- Drooling
- Preference for softer food vs biscuits, or even just licking the jelly off food
- Facial swelling
- Pawing / rubbing at mouth
- Reluctant to have face touched
- Blood stained saliva



Scarsdale Vets  
Pride Veterinary Centre  
Riverside Road  
Derby DE24 8HX  
Telephone: 01332 678333  
[www.scarsdalevets.com](http://www.scarsdalevets.com)



## How dental disease develops

### 1. PLAQUE

- Bacteria sticks to the surface of teeth combined with saliva and food
- This is colourless and can't be seen



### 2. TARTAR

- This is a yellow/brown hard coating on the teeth which is difficult to remove



### 3. GINGIVITIS

- The gums are inflamed and swollen
- They will often bleed
- At this stage dental disease is reversible



### 4. PERIODONTAL DISEASE

- In this stage the supporting tissues around the teeth (gums/ligaments/bones) become destroyed
- This is either classed as early, moderate or advanced, depending on the level of loss of support to the tooth

## How can dental disease be prevented?

- Regular check-ups at their routine health check and vaccination
- Brushing - this is the gold standard way of preventing problems and ideally should be started early in puppies and kittens so it can be done as part of their daily routine, but you can start brushing their teeth at any age. Toothpastes are available that have enzymes in that help to break down the plaque and early tartar. Do not use human toothpastes though as these may contain things that are toxic to pets such as xylitol
- Topical medications or food/water additives - these can help to prevent plaque build-up and sometimes soften tartar and can be applied directly to the gums or added to the food
- Dental chews / diets - these help by increasing the amount of chewing food pets need to do and therefore help to prevent the plaque sticking to the teeth



## Dental Treatment

If the dental disease is advanced and periodontal disease present, treatment is needed under a general anaesthetic, this often done as a day patient and in older animals we would advise pre anaesthetic bloods to assess their general health and ensure that your pet has no underlying conditions that will increase the risk of a general anaesthetic. Under the anaesthetic we fully examine the teeth by probing which looks for pockets where the teeth attachments have been

broken down and also do dental x rays to assess the teeth under the gum line looking for any sign of abscesses / broken roots etc.

Once a full assessment has been carried out the teeth are given a full scale and polish and any diseased teeth will be removed, local anaesthetic nerve blocks and pain relief are given and if appropriate antibiotics. Pets are often able to come back home on the same day depending on their recovery from the anaesthetic and we will ensure they have all the medication they need to keep them comfortable after the procedure and a discharge form, so you know how to look after them after their anaesthetic.

They will have a check-up after a week after the dental work to ensure that have recovered well from their anaesthetic and dental and ongoing preventative care can be discussed and tips and advice can be given on how to keep their teeth in the best condition possible.

Dental disease does not just cause bad teeth that you can see but there can be hidden problems as well:

- A) Heart disease - due to inflamed gums or exposed blood vessels bacteria can enter the blood stream and find their way to the heart where they can cause Endocarditis - this is an inflammation/infection of the heart valves
- B) Kidney disease - bacteria invade the kidneys and damages them which then causes them to function improperly
- C) Liver disease
- D) Sinus infection/nasal infections - due to the tooth roots being very close to the nasal cavity and sinuses any infections affecting teeth can erode the bone that separates the teeth and can the result in a spread of infection
- E) Respiratory tract disease - bacteria present in the mouth if in excessive amounts as seen in dental disease can easily find their way into the trachea and deeper into the lungs potentially resulting in pneumonia
- F) Osteomyelitis - this is an infection in the bone that can occur surrounding diseased teeth, this weakens the bone and in severe cases can lead to fractures of the jaw
- G) Stomach problems - all the bacteria present in your pet's mouth with dental disease is swallowed along with the toxins that they produce ending up in the stomach this can then result in tummy upsets
- H) Dental disease can make existing health problems worse or harder to control e.g. diabetes

## Feline resorptive lesions

Cats can develop erosions in their teeth just around the gum line and are often hidden by the gum they are very sensitive and can cause the tooth to fracture often leaving the roots behind. These can happen in cats of any age.

Dental care in pets is very important so regular check-ups are advised and if treated early can be prevented and prevent pets becoming uncomfortable.



If you're concerned your pet may be showing signs of Dental Disease, call your local Scarsdale practice and speak to a vet or nurse



Scarsdale Vets  
Pride Veterinary Centre  
Riverside Road  
Derby DE24 8HX  
Telephone: 01332 678333  
[www.scarsdalevets.com](http://www.scarsdalevets.com)

