



DENTAL DISEASE IN DOGS

DENTAL FACTS

IT'S A SAD FACT THAT OVER 85% OF DOGS IN THE UK OVER 3 YEARS OLD WILL BE AFFECTED BY DENTAL DISEASE. THIS MAKES DENTAL DISEASE BY FAR THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF ILLNESS AND DOG SUFFERING IN THE UK. THIS IS AN ESPECIALLY SAD FACT WHEN YOU REALISE THAT DENTAL DISEASE IS PREVENTABLE IF ACTION IS TAKEN EARLY.

STAGES OF DENTAL DISEASE

THE PROBLEMS BEGIN WITH PLAQUE, WHICH IS A STICKY CLEAR SUBSTANCE FULL OF BACTERIA. PLAQUE BUILDS UP ON TEETH VERY QUICKLY, AND IT IS PLAQUE THAT WE BRUSH OFF OUR OWN TEETH EVERY DAY. PLAQUE IS EASY TO BRUSH AWAY, BUT IF IT ISN'T BRUSHED AWAY THEN THE BACTERIA THAT IT HARBOURS WILL CAUSE GINGIVITIS. GINGIVITIS MEANS GUM INFLAMMATION; IT IS A PAINFUL CONDITION CHARACTERISED BY RED SWOLLEN GUMS WHICH MAY BLEED DURING FEEDING. IF THE PLAQUE STILL ISN'T BRUSHED AWAY IT WILL CALCIFY AND FORM TARTAR, WHICH IS A BROWN STONY RESIDUE THAT BUILDS UP ON THE TEETH. TARTAR IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BRUSH AWAY AND WILL USUALLY REQUIRE PROFESSIONAL SCALING TO REMOVE. IF LEFT UNTREATED, THE TARTAR, PLAQUE AND BACTERIA WILL CAUSE BONE LOSS AROUND TOOTH ROOTS AND THE MOUTH AND TEETH BECOME INCREASINGLY PAINFUL. ONCE THIS STAGE IS REACHED THE BACTERIA CAN ALSO ENTER THE BLOOD AND THE RESULTING SEPTICAEMIA CAN AFFECT THE HEART, LIVER AND KIDNEYS.

CAUSES OF DENTAL DISEASE

DENTAL (OR PERIODONTAL) DISEASE CAN BE CAUSED BY A VARIETY OF FACTORS. IN DOGS, THE MOST COMMON CAUSES ARE THE *STREPTOCOCCUS* AND *ACTINOMYCES* BACTERIA. CANINE TOY BREEDS WITH CROWDED TEETH, AND DOGS THAT GROOM THEMSELVES, CARRY A HIGHER RISK OF ACQUIRING THE DISEASE. IN ADDITION, POOR NUTRITION WILL ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ONSET OF THE CONDITION.

DOES MY DOG HAVE DENTAL DISEASE?

1. SMELL YOUR DOG'S BREATH - BAD BREATH OR HALITOSIS MAY BE THE FIRST NOTICEABLE SIGN.
2. LOOK IN YOUR DOG'S MOUTH FOR PLAQUE, TARTAR OR GINGIVITIS. HEALTHY TEETH SHOULD BE WHITE AND SHINY AND HEALTHY GUMS SHOULD BE A GLISTENING SALMON PINK COLOUR.
3. WATCH YOUR DOG EAT - AN ANIMAL WITH A SORE MOUTH WILL EAT MORE SLOWLY THAN USUAL AND WILL OFTEN CHEW ON ONE SIDE OF IT'S MOUTH. EXCESSIVE DRIBBLING OR DROPPING FOOD FROM THE MOUTH CAN ALSO INDICATE A DENTAL PROBLEM.

IF YOU NOTICE ANY SIGNS OF DENTAL DISEASE IN YOUR DOG THEN PLEASE BOOK THEM IN FOR A FREE DENTAL ASSESSMENT WITH ONE OF OUR NURSES. IF THE PROBLEM IS ADVANCED, WE MAY ADVISE PROCEDURES SUCH AS DENTAL SCALING AND POLISHING OR EVEN TOOTH EXTRACTION. THESE PROCEDURES ARE ALL DONE AT OUR HOSPITAL UNDER A GENERAL ANAESTHETIC. THE TEETH ARE INITIALLY SCALED ABOVE AND BELOW THE GUM LINE TO REMOVE TARTAR WITH AN ULTRASONIC SCALER. THE ROOTS ARE THEN PROBES TO CHECK FOR DAMAGE. ANY DAMAGED TEETH ARE THEN REMOVED USING PERIODONTAL ELEVATORS AND HIGH-SPEED DRILLS. FINALLY, ALL THE TEETH ARE CHARTED FOR OUR RECORDS AND ARE POLISHED WITH PASTE. AFTER ALL THIS THEN THE IMPORTANT JOB OF HOME CARE AND DAILY BRUSHING CAN CONTINUE.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT DENTAL DISEASE?

1. BRUSHING

THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT DENTAL PROBLEMS IS TO BRUSH YOUR DOG'S TEETH, WE RECOMMEND THAT ALL DOGS HAVE THEIR TEETH BRUSHED EVERY DAY. IT IS BEST TO START THIS AS A ROUTINE FOR PUPPIES AS THEY WILL LEARN TO ACCEPT BRUSHING MORE READILY IF DONE FROM AN EARLY AGE. IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START THOUGH, AND WITH PATIENCE AND PLENTY OF PRAISE MOST DOGS CAN BE TAUGHT TO HAVE THEIR TEETH BRUSHED.

START TO TRAIN YOUR DOG SIMPLY BY LIFTING THE GUMS SO YOU CAN EXAMINE THE TEETH. ONCE THIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED, TRY PLACING SOME TOOTHPASTE (NEVER USE HUMAN PASTE) ONTO YOUR FINGER AND GENTLY RUBBING IT ONTO YOUR DOG'S TEETH AND GUMS. IT MAY TAKE SEVERAL DAYS OR WEEKS FOR YOUR DOG TO GET USED TO THIS BUT PLEASE BE PATIENT. WHEN BRUSHING, YOU ONLY NEED TO CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF THE TEETH, SO THERE IS NO NEED TO OPEN YOUR DOG'S MOUTH, JUST RAISE THE LIPS.

2. LONG ACTING DENTAL GEL

THIS THICK GEL CONTAINS AN ANTIBACTERIAL FORMULATION AND DUE TO IT'S STICKINESS WILL COAT THE TEETH AND REMOVE THE NEED FOR BRUSHING. IT IS NOT AS GOOD AT BRUSHING AS IT ONLY CLEANS WITH A CHEMICAL ACTION, WHEREAS BRUSHING WITH A PASTE CLEANS WITH A CHEMICAL AND MECHANICAL ACTION.

3. ORAL HYGIENE RINSE

THIS MOUTH RINSE IS EASIER TO APPLY THAN THE PASTES AND BRUSHES AS IT IS SQUIRTED INTO YOUR DOG'S MOUTH. THE ANTIBACTERIAL ACTION WILL HELP REDUCE PLAQUE AND BACTERIA BUILD UP, BUT THE RINSE IS NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS BRUSHING.

4. DIET

FOR DOGS THAT REFUSE TO ACCEPT TOOTH BRUSHING WE CAN COMPROMISE BY FEEDING DIETS SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO REDUCE PLAQUE BUILD UP. THESE DIETS ARE BISCUIT BASED AND THE KIBBLES OF BISCUITS ARE LARGE AND CHEWY, THE CHEWING ACTION WILL PREVENT PLAQUE BUILD UP. THE ADVANTAGE OF THESE DIETS IS THAT YOU CAN KEEP YOUR DOG'S TEETH CLEAN JUST BY FEEDING. THE DIETS, HOWEVER, ARE STILL NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS A GOOD BRUSHING REGIME.

