



## Oral Health

Our pets can also suffer from dental disease, it is estimated that between 60 to 80% are affected . Problems occur when plaque builds up on the teeth, this is a combination of food bacteria and saliva. If the plaque is not removed it can harden into tartar. It may also lead to inflammation of the gums known as gingivitis. This can be a painful condition causing your pet discomfort when they are eating and in severe cases your pet may stop eating altogether. If left untreated gingivitis can lead to periodontal disease which can cause irreversible damage to the teeth so the only remedy is to extract them under a general anaesthetic.

### Symptoms to look out for are:

- Halitosis (Bad Breath)
- Increased saliva production
- Plaque or tartar build up on the teeth
- Reluctance to eat or a change in their eating habits
- Inflamed and/or bleeding gums
- Cats may stop or reduce the time spent grooming

Prevention is better than cure and it is never too late to start an oral health care programme to help reduce or slow the progression of dental disease. Even young dogs benefit from regular oral hygiene care.

Our nurses can check your pet's teeth, free of charge, and get you and your pet started on an oral health programme. The best prevention of poor oral hygiene is daily brushing your pet's teeth, this must only be carried out using a toothpaste suitable for pets but not all pets are willing to let us brush their teeth.

Therefore during your pet's free dental check our nurses can discuss the best plan for you and your pet, this will include advice on products that can reduce or remove plaque or for some pets specially formulated dental diets may be more appropriate.

They may also advise that due to the amount of tartar accumulation further veterinary treatment such as a dental under a general anaesthetic would be advisable, before you continue with the planned oral hygiene programme.

## Nurse Clinics

If you do not need to see the vet you can see our qualified veterinary nurses for free advice on many different topics such as kitten and puppy advice, flea and worm products and dietary advice.

### Our nurses are happy to help you and your pet for any of the following:

- 2nd Vaccinations
- Weight Clinics
- Diabetic Clinics
- Flea and Worm checks
- Puppy and Kitten advice
- Dietary Advice
- Post-operative Checks
- Removal of sutures post-surgery
- Microchipping\*
- Nail clipping\*

Nurse clinics are run daily at both of our surgeries. Appointments are necessary and charges may apply. Book in today to see us.

\*a small charge applies, please check with a member of staff for more details.

## Chocolate

It's nearly Easter, there will be lots of chocolate around so it is best to be aware of the dangers chocolate can cause for your pets.

Chocolate contains a product called theobromine, which is toxic to cats and dogs. The darker the chocolate is, the more toxic it will be. If ingested chocolate can cause diarrhoea and dehydration. Animals may become hyperactive and develop hyperthermia, in severe cases they can start fitting.

Treatment would include inducing vomiting if recently eaten and rehydrating your pet.

Make sure you keep the Easter eggs out of your dog's way!

If you think or know your pet has eaten any chocolate please contact the surgery immediately.



## Care of our Elderly Pets

As our pets age they can exhibit a number of subtle changes that may indicate the early signs of chronic diseases.

### An increased thirst

This may indicate the start of kidney disease or diabetes. If you suspect your pet may be drinking more measure the amount of water they drink a day, by putting a measured amount into their bowl, the following morning measure how much is left.

Our nurses can perform a basic kidney and diabetes check on a urine sample, so if you are able to collect a morning sample from your pet please bring to the surgery as soon as possible. Collection devices for both cats and dogs are available from the surgery but a clean lidded container can be used (but not a jam jar as it may still contain traces of sugar).

### Stiffness

If your pet struggles to rise after sleeping, has trouble jumping in and out of the car or onto furniture this may be an early sign of arthritis. As arthritis is a progressive disease dogs may begin to limp but our cats rarely do, instead they either don't attempt to jump up onto furniture and work surfaces or are more hesitant as they jump up or down.

As well as prescription arthritis medication, there are a number of different joint support products on the market and our vets and nurses can advise you on which is the most appropriate for your pet.

For our less mobile pets or those elderly pets who spend more of their time asleep thicker and softer bedding can reduce the potential risk of pressure sores forming.

### Changes in weight

Like us as they age our pet's weight can change as well.

Our older pets which are either less mobile through arthritic changes or unable to walk as far or play are more likely to gain weight if they are fed the same diet and amount of food as they had when they were younger and more active.

Many pet food companies produce diets that are formulated for your pet's different lifestyles. If you are unsure which diet is best for your pet then our nurses are happy to provide free advice.

If your pet appears to have lost weight this can be a sign of an underlying disease, so it is advisable that we regularly weigh your pet. Especially for cats a small reduction in weight can be significant.

### Lumps and bumps

Especially in our dogs as they age lumps and bumps tend to appear, it is worth checking your pet by running your hands all over their body every 1-2 months.

If you find a lump, make a note on a calendar or in your diary of where it is, it's shape, size and firmness. Then when you next check your pet check if it has grown in size or changed shape or become harder or softer.

Any lumps that you notice are rapidly changing in size, shape or firmness should be checked by the vet.

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