

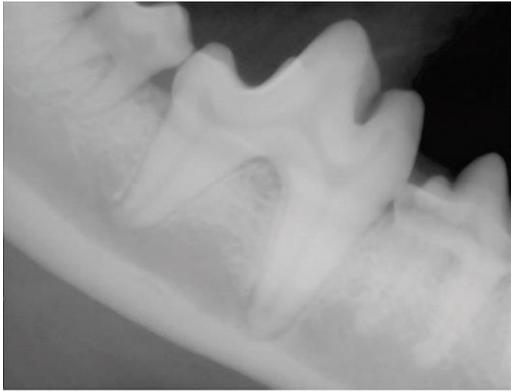


## Dental Care

Did you know that 80% of animals over 5 years of age have some form of dental disease? At Advanced Pet Care of Clear Lake, we utilize the latest techniques and modern equipment to provide the best dental care for your pet. This handout explains exactly what is involved in the dentistry procedure at Advanced Pet Care of Clear Lake.

### Steps to a Healthy Mouth

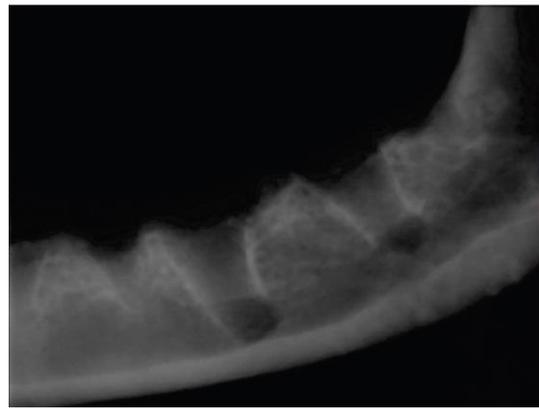
- 1. Physical Examination.** Every animal we see has an examination of the mouth performed as part of the general physical examination. We can see if there is obvious disease in the mouth. We will stage the severity of the dental disease we can see from 1-4, with 1 being minor dental problems and 4 being major dental problems. This gives us a rough idea of what we may need to do during a dental procedure. It is difficult to fully examine the mouth of an awake pet, and we can only see the crowns of the teeth, NOT the roots. We will provide a rough estimate for the procedures we may need to do. We may find more problems during the dental procedure and in this case we will call you to discuss our findings and give you an estimated cost for the procedure.
- 2. Preoperative Bloodwork.** Any animal that receives general anesthesia at Advanced Pet Care of Clear Lake receives both a CBC (complete blood count) and a chemistry profile to assess their kidney and liver values. It is essential to know before anesthesia if there are any pre-existing conditions that may put your pet at risk.
- 3. General Anesthesia.** Dentistry requires an animal to be under a general anesthetic. An IV catheter is placed, and the patient is given an anesthetic. After that, an endotracheal tube is placed to protect the pet's airway and allow for continued anesthesia with isoflurane gas. The pet is hooked up to computerized monitors in addition to being monitored by a veterinary technician and/or the doctor during the dental procedure. Fluids are given to maintain hydration and stabilize blood pressure.
- 4. Intraoral Radiology.** We perform X-rays of the teeth for all patients undergoing a dental procedure. The only way to accurately evaluate the whole tooth is to X-ray it. The crown is the only portion of the tooth visible. The root of the tooth is embedded in a socket in the jaw bone. In many cases, the crown of the tooth may appear normal, but an X-ray of the tooth may reveal a problem with the root that requires treatment. Once all of the teeth in the mouth have been X-rayed, the treating veterinarian reviews the X-rays and decides on what therapy is required for each tooth.



Here is an X-ray of a dog's lower jaw.



*This is an X-ray of a dog with severe dental disease. You can see that the bone around the roots of the teeth has receded away from the tooth roots. These teeth will need to be removed.*



*Once we have removed the affected teeth, we take another X-ray to make sure that all of the roots have been removed.*

5. **Scaling and Polishing.** Scaling is the process where the tartar is removed from the teeth and under the gingiva. Tartar is produced by bacteria that live on the teeth. Tartar causes inflammation of the gums (gingivitis). This leads to recession of the gums, exposure of the tooth roots, and eventually, loss of the tooth. We remove the tartar with a combination of an ultrasonic scaler and hand scaling. Removal of the tartar on the teeth is vital to improving the health of the mouth. It also removes the source of the patient's halitosis (bad breath). After scaling, we polish all the teeth to smooth the surface of the enamel in order to help prevent accumulation of plaque and tartar.

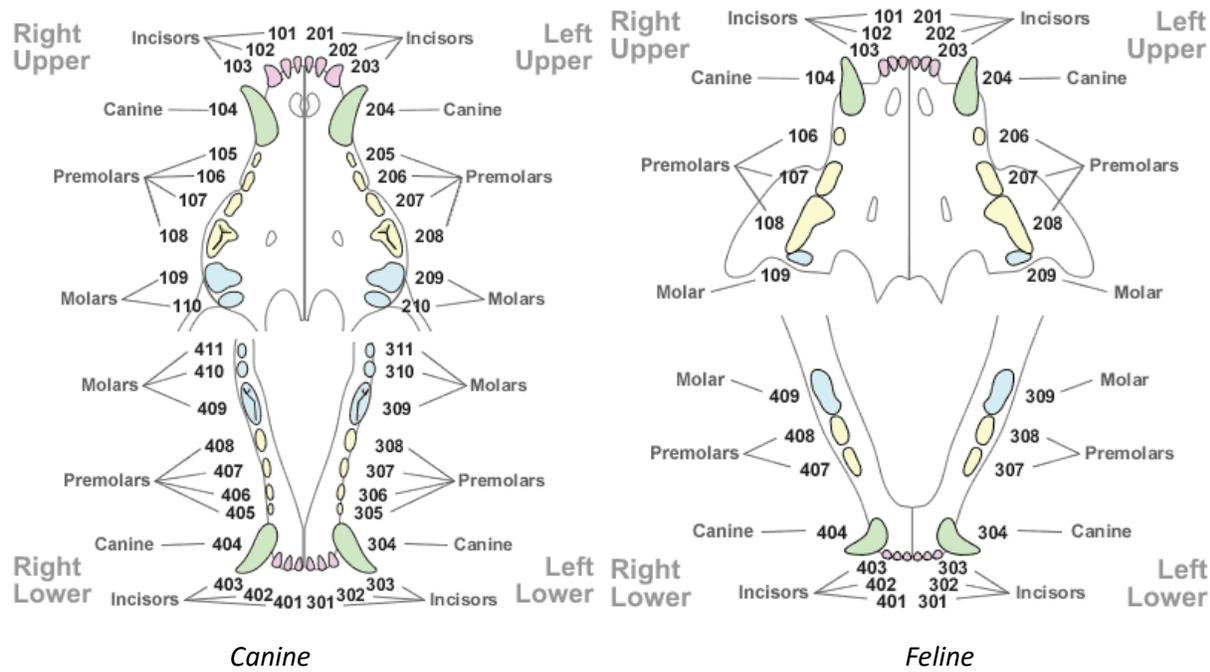


*The ultrasonic scaler is being used to remove tartar from the cat's teeth*

6. **Periodontal Probing.** Once the teeth have been scaled, the veterinarian examines each tooth individually with a periodontal probe. We use the probe to look for pockets. Pockets are caused by the gum losing its attachment to the tooth. Bacteria and tartar can accumulate in the pocket, causing the wall of the tooth socket to erode. This leads to loosening of the tooth in the socket, and eventually, this leads to tooth loss. A small pocket is usually treated by cleaning, flushing, and applying a long-lasting antibiotic directly in the pocket called Doxirobe. A deep pocket usually requires that the affected tooth be removed.



7. **Charting.** The combination of radiology and periodontal probing allows us to accurately diagnose any problems with the teeth and formulate a treatment plan. We use a special chart to record our findings and treatments.



8. **Extractions.** If we decide that a tooth cannot be saved, it will be extracted. The first step is to place a local anesthetic block to block the nerve. Even though the patient is under an anesthetic, removing a tooth can cause pain, and the local block gives the patient immediate pain relief. The effect lasts for several hours to offer the patient post-operative comfort. Once the block has taken effect, we elevate a flap of gum tissue to expose the jaw bone. A high-speed drill is used to cut the tooth into sections to allow for easier removal. The tooth is removed using instruments called elevators. Once the tooth is removed, the socket is cleaned, and a post extraction X-ray is taken to make sure that all of the roots have been removed. Once we have confirmed that there are no tooth root remnants, we fill the socket with Consil, if appropriate, and close the flap with sutures. Consil is a synthetic bone graft material that fills the defect left by the extracted tooth. It helps to prevent further bone loss which could affect neighboring teeth. Depending on the tooth that needs to be extracted, a flap and splitting the tooth may or may not be necessary.
  
9. **Post-operative care.** We will give specific post-operative instructions. This may include soft food and no chew toys for a few days or a few weeks. We will discuss treatment options designed to reduce the accumulation of tartar on the teeth. The treatment options may include a combination of teeth brushing, chews, water additives, special dental diets, and oral rinses. It is very important to remember that plaque begins accumulating very quickly after a dental procedure. If no at-home care is performed, your pet will likely begin to have bad breath and require a dental cleaning within a year.