



COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER– JANUARY 2024

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

New Year Resolutions ... Look after that smile!

It is important as owners that we are aware of the dental health status of our pets. One of the most common diseases of the mouth is called periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is a generalised term for changes to the structures of teeth which may include infection or inflammation. This can range from gingivitis to very advanced periodontal disease, (as illustrated in the pictures below right), and each stage may require varying levels of treatment from a timely scale and polish to multiple extractions to remove badly diseased teeth. These treatments require a general anaesthetic to ensure a thorough examination and to perform cleaning, descaling and extractions if required. If periodontal disease is left unmanaged you may notice your pet suffers discomfort whilst eating or shows signs of illness, as the infection or inflammation can cause local or systemic disease.

What makes up periodontal disease?

- **Plaque** – a bacterial and food residue which gathers on the surface of the tooth and can build up to become very thick and difficult to remove.
- **Tartar** – a hard brownish grey sediment that builds up on the surface of the tooth. This can encourage growth of harmful micro-organisms.
- **Gingivitis** – the result of accumulation of plaque. As the tartar increases so does the bacteria causing localised inflammation.

How do prevent my pet's teeth from developing periodontal disease?

Brushing, brushing and more brushing! This is the best way of preventing advanced periodontal disease which requires dental treatment. It is important to try and implement daily brushing into your pet's everyday routine. They may see it as an unpleasant experience, so plenty of positive reinforcement while training is key! The use of good quality pet toothpaste, powders, liquids and even specially formulated diets, which will make the breakdown of plaque much easier, are ideal.

A step by step guide on how to brighten your pet's smile day to day:

1. Allow your pet to taste the toothpaste; they will enjoy the flavour, thinking it's a treat.
2. Gently hold your pet's mouth with one hand, steadying the head with your palm beneath the chin.
3. Gently lift their lips to access teeth at the side. Use the paste on your finger (or a finger brush) on the teeth initially for 1-2 seconds, increasing this contact time over a few days. Lips move backwards easily to access the back teeth.
4. Praise your pet for calm behaviour and go at their pace.
5. Stop if your pet becomes distressed or over excited, ignore them and then try again once calm.
6. Introduce paste on a pet toothbrush.
7. Use gentle forward– back 'scrubbing' action on each tooth and across the gum line.
8. Start at the sides of the mouth and then move to the front. Gradually increase time/number of teeth brushed – with practice you can clean all the outside surfaces of the teeth.
9. Eventually you maybe able to open the mouth and brush the inside surfaces.
10. Try to make toothbrushing calm and enjoyable for both you and your pet.



We have various products available to help with your pet's dental health. Remember, prevention is always better than cure! Feel free to ask a member of the Companion Animal Team about the available products or book in for a dental examination and advice clinic with one of our trained veterinary nurses.

AFFORDABLE PET CARE

We are certainly living in times where every penny counts! The cost of living continues to rise with no signs of slowing for the foreseeable future so being savvy with our finances is essential, not only in cutting down on our spending overall but also being mindful of what we spend our hard earned cash on. Investment in the right things will lead to savings in the future. The health of our pets needs to be one of our mindful investments, one that we plan and budget for, not only to keep our beloved companions happy and healthy, but also to help keep their care affordable.

PET HEALTH CARE IS AN INVESTMENT. The old adage prevention is better than cure is very true. When times are hard it can be tempting to skip preventative treatments, missing out on vaccinations or health and dental checks. You might think you can make a saving by not worming or giving your pet their parasite control treatments, opting to wait until they have an issue but.... STOP! Not only would you be exposing your pet to the preventable risk of illness and disease, you are also opening yourself up to the risk of needing to spend a lot more on your pet's healthcare! **Health checks** can pick up on any potential health problems **early**, which can often be treated conservatively avoiding extensive treatment. **The diseases we vaccinate against can be highly infectious, and are often fatal**, but they **are** preventable through vaccination! In unvaccinated animals, the illness can be severe which is heartbreaking to see, and if treatment is an option it is often prolonged and costly. As already discussed overleaf our pets' teeth need regular care just like our own, regular **dental checks** and if necessary, a scale and polish are essential to avoiding the added expense of major dental work such as extractions being needed if tooth or gum disease is left untreated. **Parasite control** is the responsibility of all pet owners, not only to protect our pets against preventable parasites and the multitude of problems they bring (such as flea bite allergies and Lyme disease), but to protect vulnerable members of the human population, the very old and the very young against transmissible parasites and associated disease. It is also in the interest of your finances to keep up to date with parasite control. Anyone who has experienced a flea infestation (which can happen at any time of year) will know just how much it can cost both financially but also in terms of time to get under control (12—16 weeks on average).

WE CAN HELP WITH THE COST OF YOUR PET'S PREVENTABLE HEALTH CARE!

The Dalehead Healthy Pet Club is an in-house plan created by our own vets and run by our practice to offer your dogs and cats a full year of preventative parasite control and an annual vaccination as well as offering free health checks with our qualified nurses, nail trims and various discounts on food and preventative health care such as dentals and neutering. The plans offer significant discounts on the normal price of the products and services included and payments are spread over the course of the year, paying monthly by direct debit. There is no joining fee and no upper age limit, from puppies and kittens up to OAP's, all are welcome! The plans cover your pet's **preventative healthcare**—they are **not** insurance policies. With this in mind...

CHOOSE YOUR PET INSURANCE CAREFULLY

Even when we do the best for our pets and provide them with preventative care there may still be times when the unexpected happens, whether this be accident or illness. Having the financial security of an insurance policy in place for any eventuality means that we can give our pets the best care without having to worry about the cost. Insurance policies can vary enormously both in cost and crucially, in what they offer. It is important to do the homework and enter a contract of insurance that is right for you and your pet. Check the small print, what is included and what is not. Does the policy offer lifetime cover for long term conditions? Is there a fixed time limit or payment amount per condition? Make sure you ask questions before signing up to a policy if you are unsure about what is covered.

Relax... Knowing everything is taken care of.



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

