

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

DENTAL AWARENESS MONTH

Number one health problems in dogs and cats

What disease is diagnosed most often in the dogs and cats we see at Dalehead Vets?

.... The answer is Dental Disease!

85% of dogs and 75% of cats over 3 years old are reported to suffer from some form of dental disease. Studies have shown that each year in the UK about 12.5% of dogs (1 in 8) and 15% of cats have dental disease needing treatment. Signs range from bad breath to sore gums to painful purulent mouth infection.

Dogs and cats both suffer from periodontal disease caused when bacterial plaque on the surface of the teeth builds up to form brown tartar and gum disease. The bacterial infection causes receding gums, breakdown of the ligament anchoring the tooth root in its socket and eventually painful tooth and bone breakdown and abscessation. A descale and polish removes the tartar to halt dental disease progression. Those teeth too badly affected are extracted.

Dental examination for our patients is carried out under general anaesthetic supplemented with local anaesthetic block should extractions be necessary.

A different type of dental disease seen in cats is Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions (FORL). In this case the build-up of bacterial plaque causes painful erosion of tooth enamel at the gum level, sometimes complicated by ossification of tooth roots.

Dog and cat teeth have long divergent roots, mainly 2-3 per tooth, very firmly attached (more so than human teeth). For this reason, dental extraction often involves a surgical procedure whereby the tooth is divided into constituent crown/root parts and removed root-by-root via a gingival flap and burring away some of the outer bony socket wall. Dissolvable sutures after extraction aids healing and greatly reduces pain and discomfort, as does post operative anti-inflammatory pain relief medication. Not all these dental changes are immediately obvious on examination of the mouth, even under general anaesthetic (GA). Valuable extra information to help select the best targeted treatment is obtained from dental x-rays (under GA).

As a local independent vet practice, we have recently upgraded our dental x-ray facilities enabling high resolution imaging as a routine part of our dental procedures.

For a pet, having bad teeth harbouring a huge load of noxious bacteria, has a significant effect on quality of life. Often clients tell us how much happier their pet is after having had dental treatment. Dry food is better than wet food for pets' teeth, we stock a dental care life stage food which is a high fibre tooth- cleaning kibble prescription diet.

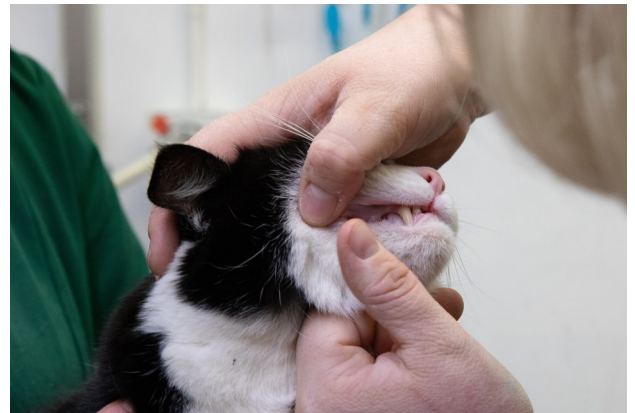
How can you best avoid your pet having bad teeth need a major dental procedure? The answer is, if possible, to brush their teeth every day!

The x-ray's to the right show a side-on x-ray of a cats head and upper neck, and a dental x-ray of a canine tooth and adjacent incisors and premolars, more information will be available on next month's article which will expand more about the new dental x-ray machine.



STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO A BRIGHTER SMILE

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.



DENTAL WORDSEARCH

A	B	D	E	N	T	A	L	H	J	K	L	O	B	V	T	O	O	T	H	A	R	O	U	T	S	A	R	E	A
S	O	W	G	I	N	H	G	E	A	P	O	L	I	S	H	Y	T	C	L	E	A	N	V	U	I	O	B	A	D
C	W	E	V	T	B	T	R	E	A	T	M	E	N	T	E	D	C	B	A	T	M	E	D	I	C	I	N	E	O
A	P	L	A	Q	U	E	D	F	E	T	B	T	O	O	T	H	P	A	S	T	E	Q	K	R	P	I	G	B	Q
L	A	R	O	Y	E	W	G	I	N	G	I	V	I	T	I	S	A	D	G	R	E	W	B	M	I	H	G	F	P
E	X	T	R	A	C	T	I	O	N	L	F	B	R	U	S	H	D	A	T	R	W	P	O	H	J	Y	F	Y	I

DENTAL

EXTRACTION

POLISH

MEDICINE

CLEAN

PLAQUE

ROOT

BRUSH

SCALE

TREATMENT

TOOTH

TOOTHPASTE

ORAL

GINGIVITIS



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